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BAKER, 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass.

When a Feller Needs a Friend

A Farce in Three Acts

By
J. C. McMULLEN

NOTE

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
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When a Feller Needs a Friend

CHARACTERS

(*In order of appearance.*)

TOM DENKER, *an artist.*
BOB MILLS, *a magazine writer.*
MRS. REESE, *their landlady.*
JERRY SMITH, *just returned from "Over There."*
LIZ, *Mrs. Reese's stepdaughter.*
"BING" DICKSON, *Liz's steady.*
WILLIAM DENKER, *Tom's uncle.*
ALICE KING, *Tom's aunt.*
ELAINE LYNNE, *Alice King's ward.*
ANGELA SCOTT, *Bob's fiancée.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. A room in Mrs. Reese's apartment house, 10 : 00 A. M.
ACT II. The same. 11 : 00 A. M.
ACT III. The same. 12 : 00 M.

TIME. A Friday morning in November, 1919.

PLACE. New York City.

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COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Tom. A young man of twenty-five. First act should wear ordinary street clothes except that he should wear pajama coat instead of regular coat and vest. Should also have a bedspread pinned over his shoulders. During act one he is given coat and vest by Bob which should match pants he is already wearing. Should not change clothes during the play.

Bob. Same age as Tom. First act wears pajama pants with coat and vest to match the pants worn by Tom. During first act is furnished complete suit by Jerry, which he wears during entire play.

Jerry. Age twenty-five. First entrance should wear U. S. officer's cap, leather puttees and long raincoat. Should have sheet wrapped around him so it will show when Bob opens his coat. During the first act he secures a suit much too large for him which he wears during the entire play.

William Denker. A fussy, bossy man of fifty-five. Wears regulation business suit.

"Bing." An up-to-the-minute slangy chauffeur of about twenty-four. Should wear chauffeur's uniform during entire play.

Mrs. Reese. A rather slovenly apartment house keeper. Her hair should be a trifle disarranged. Should wear not too clean wrapper and common gingham apron, the latter to be used during her crying spells. Has ear horn which she uses during entire play. Should be particular in trying to get every one's conversation. Should be played in a high pitched voice. Her dress should be a little neater for the second and third act than for the first. Age about forty-five.

Liz. A girl of twenty, slangy and able to care for herself. Should wear wrapper or kitchen dress, should not be too clean, apron, and have broom for first appear-

ance. For last appearance of first act should change to cheap, gaudy dress made in the most extreme style. Hair should be very elaborate, ear rings, bracelet, etc.

AUNT. A neat, motherly woman of fifty. Traveling dress.

ELAINE. } Girls of twenty-two or twenty-three.
ANGELA. } Should wear neat street dresses.

NOTE

For the first part of Act I stage should be entirely bare with the exception of two soap boxes, one center and one back. Later as the furniture is carried in it can be arranged to suit the stage. There should be a large table for center of stage to be used for dining scene, a small table right, about six ordinary chairs, and a couch. Furniture should be shabby. Everything in connection with the stage should give the impression of a cheap, second-rate apartment house.

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When a Feller Needs a Friend

ACT I

The curtain goes up on a bare room, neither rug nor furniture being used. One door and window R., *door* C. *and door* L. *One small dry goods box back and one center.* TOM *is standing at center door looking off* L.; *has on trousers, pajama coat, and bedspread over shoulders; is talking off.*

TOM (*much excited*). Be careful. For Heaven's sake, don't spill it.

(*Parrot heard off* L. *shrieking:—"Thief, Thief, Thief. Stole Polly's cracker. Cracker, Cracker, Cracker."*)

BOB (*enters* C. D., *wearing pajama pants, and coat and vest. Is carrying saucer of milk and cracker*). Well, I made it. (*Goes* C.)

TOM (*following*). Did you run into Mrs. Reese?

BOB. No, thank God. Every time I meet that woman I get shivers up and down my spine. My very knee caps tremble.

TOM. This sure goes against the grain to be stealing the dog's milk and the parrot's cracker to keep from going hungry. Which do you want, the cracker or the milk?

BOB (*reaching milk to* TOM). I never did like milk.

TOM (*takes it*). All right. I'll tackle it. (*Goes to drink it.*) Did the dog get a lick at it first?

BOB (*eating cracker*). I don't think so. It was strolling leisurely toward it when it bumped into my foot. Oh, it was accidental, I assure you. Just the same I think

it is picking the kinks out of its back on the roof of the house next door. It sure sailed out of the window pretty when I hit it. Lord, but I hate that dog. Little Tiddilums. I'd like to Tiddilum it.

TOM. Shame on you! Poor doggy!

BOB. Poor polly, I say. She did the most yelling. There would have been ructions if Mrs. Reese had heard her squawking. Thank Heavens, though, she's deaf. (*Loud knock at* C. D.) Jerusalem! I'll bet that's her.

(*Stuffs cracker into his mouth and chokes.*)

TOM (*pounds him on the back*). Swallow it for heaven's sake. (*Puts saucer in pocket and opens door.*) Good-morning, Mrs. Reese. Won't you come in?

MRS. REESE (*enters* C. D. *with dog in her arms, stands and looks around a moment. She has ear trumpet which she uses during the entire play*). Some miscreant stole Little Tiddilums' milk, and while not for a moment would I think either of you did it, still, I will say as how I saw your door close mighty suspicious like when I went out to see what Polly was screaming about.

TOM. Why, Mrs. Reese! Surely you wouldn't think we would stoop to a thing like that.

MRS. R. Hey?

TOM (*shouting in trumpet*). I said we wouldn't do a thing like that.

MRS. R. I'm not talking about a hat.

TOM (*shouting*). No. No. I said we wouldn't do a thing like that.

MRS. R. But I'm not talking about a hat.

TOM. Oh, what's the use? She can't hear you unless you say something about your bill.

MRS. R. Bill? Bill? Did I hear you say something about your bill? That's just it. Here I am a poor widdy woman with a lazy, good-for-nothing darter, a poll parrot and a dog to support, and you two big, strong, husky men take up one of my front bedrooms and you ain't able to pay your rent. (TOM *attempts to speak; she prevents him.*) Oh, I know you was here before the war, and always paid your rent, and I'm always willing to do all

I can for the boys as was over there, but when it comes to letting you two stay in my rooms for nigh onto four months it's most too much.

BOB. But Mrs. Reese ——

MRS. R. So I was just a-telling Liz last night that something must be did for all the tenants on this floor has left but you and Mrs. Slosson on account of her baby getting the measles. I suppose you'd 'a' left if you had any place to go.

TOM. Please, Mrs. Reese ——

MRS. R. So I says to Liz last night, I says, something's gotta be done for I have bills coming in right along. There was the ice man yesterday, five dollars and forty-two cents. You gotta have ice. And the grocery-man thirty-eight dollars and twenty-seven cents. You gotta eat. And the butcher, fifteen dollars and forty-six cents, and the gas man ——

TOM. Please, Mrs. Reese ——

MRS. R. (*paying no attention to him*). Three dollars and seventy-five cents, and the Lord only knows what else is liable to show up to-day. So I simply must have some rent from Mr. Denker and Mr. Mills, I says to Liz, and that's all there is to it. I think I've been pretty patient if anybody was to ast you. Things wouldn't 'a' been left run this way if my poor dear Ahenobarbus was a-living. Him as was my first.

BOB. I sent a story off to the Cosmopolitan that I know they will accept.

MRS. R. Hey?

BOB (*shouting*). I said I sent a story to the Cosmopolitan yesterday that I know they will accept. I ought to get forty dollars for it.

MRS. R. Hey?

BOB. Forty—forty—forty!

MRS. R. No, you don't owe me that much. Jest thirty-two dollars apiece, and that means a lot to a poor lone widdy woman with a lazy good-for-nothing darter to support and a dog and a polly —— (*Crying.*) Oh, if only poor dear Ahenobarbus hadn't 'a' died.

(*Sits on box* C. *and cries into apron.*)

TOM. You see, Mrs. Reese, our fortunes are at a pretty low ebb just at present but I expect to hear from my uncle ——

MRS. R. Hey?

TOM. I said our fortunes are at a pretty low ebb just at present but I expect to hear from my uncle this week and then I will settle up with you for sure.

MRS. R. Hey?

TOM. Settle up. Settle up. You know; settle up.

MRS. R. (*rising*). Yes, that's what I want you to do. Thirty-two dollars apiece. I won't be put off much longer either. This is Friday. I'll give you to-morrow night and if you ain't come across, out you git, you and your baggage or what's left of it. How do you expect me to pay my grocery bill if you don't pay me? You gotta eat, ain't you? It's awful, I tell you. A poor lone widdy woman with a good-for-nothing darter, a dog and a cat to support, and not a cent ahead of me. Oh, if only poor dear Ahenobarbus hadn't 'a' died, things would have been different. Come, Tiddilums darling, come to your mother. (*At door turning.*) Now mind, to-morrow night, or out you git. [*Exit* C. D. *with dog.*

BOB. To-morrow night. Did you hear that, Tom? If we don't settle up by to-morrow night, out we go.

TOM. Well, we haven't so much here that we need care a whole lot.

BOB (*sitting box* C.). But to be thrown out, just because some people can't recognize genius when they bump into it. Now I know my story "The Lion's Whelp" was good, mighty good, and worth one hundred and fifty dollars at least, but just the same it came back.

(*Picks manuscript up from box where it has been lying, looks at it a moment and then throws it* R.)

TOM (*sitting beside* BOB *on box*). Cheer up, old chap. Lots of things can happen between now and to-morrow night. Maybe we can find something to pawn. (*Goes through his pockets; then looks around room.*) It's a cinch there's nothing in this room that can go and we've only one suit between us. What the devil can we do?

(*Both sit dejectedly a moment.*)

Bob. How long have you been in New York, Tom?

Tom. Three years. Three of the longest, roughest, up-hill years I ever put in in my sweet young life. But, by George, I'm going to succeed if I have to sleep in the park. Uncle Will laughed at me and said I never could make any money out of my picture painting, as he called it, but I'll show him. Once when I was hard up I wrote to him and asked for a little help, but he replied with a sarcastic note saying if I wanted to live by painting I should be satisfied with the living it gave me. Since that time I haven't written to him very often but I sure spread it on thick when I do. Tell him I have a beautiful studio, all kinds of orders for pictures, lots of friends, lots of money ——

Bob. Lots of money! That *sounds* good.

Tom. But I believe if it hadn't been for meeting you and Jerry I would have given it up long ago. We had some good old times together before the war came along and broke up our partnership.

Bob. Things weren't so bad in those days. I had a room of my own with a real chair in it, and didn't have to sit on a soap box.

Tom. You know it's funny. I have only two relatives in the world, Uncle Will and Aunt Alice, both unmarried, fairly well off and me with good prospects of being their heir, and yet here I am broke and swiping the dog's milk to keep from going hungry. It's a great life, isn't it, Bob? Why, the money Mrs. Reese spends on that fool dog Little Tiddilums would keep me in grub. Did you ever see the place she puts it to sleep? A regular bed. Has a chair at the table and everything.

Bob. Believe me it's tough. Angela is all that made me stick it out. Only for her I'd be back in little old Zanesville, Ohio, sure of three squares a day, but she's such a game little kid that I'm going to stick it out too, just to let her know I have it in me. The Lord only knows, though, when we will be able to get married.

Tom. Where did you meet her?

Bob. At the library. Went for some data to use in a

story I was writing. One of those I never sold. Why, that girl has paid her way through college and made her way in life for the past four years. Her mother died when she was a child and her father four years ago and she has been plugging it alone ever since. It sort of gets a fellow's goat to know that she is making her thirty dollars a week regularly while I can't make thirty dollars a month, but I'm a little like you, Tom, I started in to win and I'm going to do it. We're a couple of hams, though, when we can't even raise the price of one room between us.

TOM. When does Jerry land?

BOB. Last letter I had from him stated he expected to be in yesterday. Hadn't even a nickel to go down to the dock to meet him and it was too darned far to walk. I'll sure be glad to see him. *He* ought to have some money.

TOM. He was lucky. If they did hold him over there a year after peace was signed he's been eating regularly anyway.

BOB. If he hasn't any money we can pawn his watch. I suppose he's got one.

TOM. He did have when he left. He ought to be along pretty soon.

BOB. Wouldn't it be awful if he gave it away?

TOM. If he did, we don't eat, that's all.

BOB. You mean we don't sleep. You know what the old she-bear said: "Out you git." By George! I have an idea. Couldn't you wire your Uncle Will? You told Mrs. Reese you expected to hear from him.

TOM. Not on your life! That was just a stall. I never could make him out very well. You know he was made executor of my father's estate. When everything was settled up I got one hundred dollars and the house furniture and was told that was all. Lucky I had the furniture though or I wouldn't have been able to pawn it and hold out so long.

BOB. What was the matter that you lost out?

TOM. I don't know. Uncle said Dad had made some unlucky investments or something like that and there was

nothing left but what I got. What hurt me most, though, was the way he has treated me since Dad died. No, I'd starve before I appealed to him.

BOB. Then how about Aunt Alice? She's the one I bank on. You know I always call her Aunt Alice too. You usually let me read her letters and many's the good feed we had on the little old five or ten she has slipped you when she writes.

TOM. She's a queen, but I don't want to write to her for money. I've heard that she and Uncle Will had a romance in their young days, but something broke it up and he moved out to Keokuk. She says she's going to give me what little she has when she's through with it, which I hope is many a long day yet.

(*Center door opens and* JERRY *enters. He is dressed in captain's cap, leather puttees and a long overcoat.*)

JERRY. How's everything?

BOB
TOM } (*jumping up*). Jerry!

TOM. Jerry, old chap, I'm sure glad to see you. (*They all shake hands.*) Sit down. Er, I mean have a box.

JERRY (*looking around*). What's the matter? Moving?

BOB. Yes, piece by piece for the last six months.

JERRY (*sitting on box* C.). What do you mean?

BOB. Pawned it, of course. Put your brains to work. Take off your coat.

(*Goes toward* JERRY *who jumps up and holds coat tight around him.*)

JERRY. Not on your life! That's all I've got on.

TOM. What do you mean? All you got on.

JERRY (*opens coat and shows that he has sheet wrapped around him from shoulders down*). Have a look.

TOM. Jumping Geewhillikens! What have you on? Joined some new religion over there? Belong to the Great White Mahatmas or something like that?

JERRY. No, I still have my brains, but believe me, I

sure ran into some tough luck since I landed. (TOM *pulls other box up front* R. *and he and* BOB *sit on it,* JERRY *on box* C.) Got in yesterday afternoon and by the time I got my baggage and things straightened around at the boat it was 10:30, so thought I wouldn't come out here so late but would take a room at the hotel for the night. I got a pretty nice one right near the dock.

BOB. Some location.

JERRY. As I was pretty tired I went right to bed. There was just one chair in the room near the window which opened on a very narrow court. I took off my clothes and laid them on the chair and opened the window to get some air, as it was pretty warm last night. When I got up this morning all I could find was my hat, my puttees and my shoes, which I had laid on the table by the head of the bed. The rest had absolutely disappeared. I rang for the bell boy and he looked around and then the manager came and he looked around but they made nothing of it and after telling me how sorry they were they went off and left me.

BOB. How much money did you have?

JERRY. About seventy-five dollars.

BOB. Oh, my God!

TOM. How did you get away?

JERRY. My seventy-five was in my coat pocket, but I had $1.25 in change in my pants pocket, and before I went to bed I took my handkerchief, this change and my penknife and put it under my pillow, a habit I got into when I used to carry the key to the laboratory when I went to medical college. When I found everything else had gone I called up the bell boy again, gave him a dollar and he went out and dug up this old coat at a second-hand store. I wrapped myself up in a sheet, which I thought was coming to me, put on my shoes and hat and here I am. I don't know what would have happened if I had fell down or some one had loosened my coat on the road up. Now that I have satisfied your curiosity loan me one of your suits and give me something to eat. I'm about starved.

BOB. Loan you a suit? Good Lord! We've only got

one between us. (JERRY *looks from one to the other.*) Yes, we take it turn about. To-morrow I get the pants and Bob takes the coat and vest.

TOM. And for eats, Bob just went out in the hall and swiped the dog's milk and the parrot's cracker. That's all we've had to-day and my tummy knows it. We were depending on you pawning your watch or helping us out in some way until Bob hears from a story he has sent off.

JERRY (*laughs*). This is rich. It sure beats the Dutch.

(*Puts right hand to head to smooth down hair.*)

BOB (*seeing ring on* JERRY'S *hand*). Here, give me that! (*Grabs* JERRY'S *hand and pulls at ring.*) We need it.

JERRY (*struggling*). What the ——

TOM (*going on*). Oh, come on. Be a sport. It's the only thing of value around the place. We ought to get three or four dollars for it.

JERRY (*hands* BOB *the ring*). Three or four dollars? Well, I should hope you would. I paid eighteen dollars for it.

BOB (*hands ring to* TOM). Here, Tom, you have the pants. (*Takes off coat and vest.*) Here's the coat and vest. Now beat it to old Ikestien's and raise the kale. (TOM *puts on coat and vest and starts toward* C. D.) And be sure and bring something back to fill up on.

[*Exit* TOM, C.

JERRY (*yelling out of window*). Bring some beans. They swell up.

BOB (*at window*). Yes, or dried apples. They swell too.

JERRY. Where does he have to go?

BOB (*points down*). Right below. Next door.

JERRY (*looking down*). By Jove! Bob, there's a clothing store just below us. Look, they have some suits hanging out in front.

BOB. I know it, but what good will that do us?

JERRY. Let's borrow a suit of clothes.

BOB. Are you crazy with the heat? That's a second

hand joint and you'll get nothing from there without the coin. I know.

JERRY. Suppose we borrow it when they don't know and pay them for it later.

BOB. But how? How can we get it?

JERRY (*looking around*). Got a rope around the place?

BOB. What are you going to do?

JERRY. Get the rope and I'll show you.

BOB. How about my trunk rope? I hocked the trunk, so I haven't any use for it.

JERRY. Just the thing. (BOB *takes rope from nail near door* R.) Now for a hook. Ah! Here we are. (*Pulls loose nail from box and ties it into end of rope.*) Now watch your Uncle Jerry.

(*They go to window,* JERRY *drops rope and pulls up suit which he hands to* BOB *who immediately puts on the pants while* JERRY *fishes for another suit.*)

BOB. Say, this is all right. Just my color and fits me fine. (*Puts on coat and vest.*)

JERRY (*pulling*). I believe it's caught. Here, come quick! Help me, it's caught. Pull, for I see some one coming. (*They pull up another suit.*) Ah, ha! Now we'll see what I've got. (*Puts suit on and finds suit much too large for him.*) Could you beat that? You get one that fits, while look what I got. Here, I'll trade you.

BOB. Not on your life. Mine suits me to a tee. Yours looks like a suit for an elephant.

JERRY. Dog gone it! I call that a raw deal. Here I go and cook up the scheme, you get the good suit, while I get ——

BOB. Left. But you ought to be satisfied. You hadn't *any* before.

TOM (*running in* C. D.). Here you are, four dollars and fifty cents. I didn't stop to get anything to eat. He only wanted to give me two dollars at first. (*Notices their clothes.*) Where did you get them?

JERRY (*going to window*). Right there. That's our clothier. Take a look. (TOM *leans out but not very far.* JERRY *shoves him out a little further.*) See, down there?

(TOM *grabs to keep from falling and money is heard clinking on pavement below.*)

TOM. Oh, my God! There goes our four dollars and fifty cents. Now look what you've done.

BOB (*starting for door*). Hurry up. Maybe we can get it before some one else does.

(*All start for door,* JERRY *falling, due to his large pants.* MRS. REESE *and* LIZ *appear in door* C.)

LIZ (*looking at* JERRY). Oh, you little Charlie Chaplin. Where did you git them there pants? Ain't he cute, Ma?

(JERRY *tries to hide behind* BOB *and motions for* TOM *to go for the money.*)

MRS. R. Be still, Lizobel. Ain't you got no manners? (*The boys try to get out the door,* MRS. REESE *and* LIZ *blocking it.*) Ain't I taught you to cut out that there slang and not to speak before your elders? Ain't you ever going to learn anything? You sassy brat! (*To* TOM.) Here's a couple of letters for you and I hope as how one of them has a letter from that uncle of yours, because if you don't pay up to-morrow, out you git.

LIZ. Ah, Ma, have a heart.

MRS. R. Hey?

LIZ. I said, have a heart. Don't be a tight wad. Loosen up. Loosen up.

MRS. R. Hey?

LIZ (*shoving her out* C. D.). Aw forgit it. Go on back and talk to Polly. I want to sweep up the room. (MRS. REESE *exits* C. *protesting.*) Gee whiz! If she gits any deafer I'll have to hire me a fog-horn. Here I'm a-spoiling my sweet young voice I've been a-saving for grand opery yelling at her. (*Sings exaggeratedly.*) La, la, la, la. See, it's all cracked.

BOB. You'll have to excuse us a moment, Liz, but we have an important engagement down-stairs for a minute. We'll be right back. [*All exit* C. D.

LIZ (*looks after them a moment*). Oh, don't mention it Harold, deah. Don't mind me. (*Voices heard out-*

side. "I know part of it rolled this way." "No, it went over there." "Good Lord, if it did, it went into the sewer." LIZ *goes to window and looks out.*) Good Heavens! What's eating them? They're running around as if they was hunting snipes. (*Looks around room.*) Don't look as if it would be much of a job to clean this place. Ain't much of anything left any more. Poor ginks! Why will a man stick to paintin' pictures and writin' stories when he could earn a good livin' runnin' a laundry wagon?

(*Starts to sweep and begins singing ragtime song. Finally stops sweeping and begins dancing with the broom as partner. Boys all enter dejectedly* C. D., *and sit on boxes.*)

JERRY. I'm sure sorry, old man.

TOM. Oh, don't mention it. It was your ring, you know. But I did want something to eat out of it.

BOB. Why didn't you buy something then when you had the money? I haven't had a square meal for a week.

JERRY. The whole four dollars and fifty cents must have rolled right into that sewer. Talk about luck.

LIZ (*who has been listening*). Say, is you guys hungry?

BOB. Oh, no. Not so you could mention it.

JERRY. I ate last night at 5:30 and it's now (*reaches for watch*)—good-night! That's gone too.

TOM. I'd hate to tell you when I ate last.

LIZ (*throws broom in corner*). Well, you just watch your Aunt Lizzie. Thank heavens Ma's deaf and if I do make any noise in the kitchen she can't hear me.

[*Exit,* C. D.

TOM (*at door*). Bully for Liz.

JERRY. Some name. Liz!

BOB. Some *girl,* Liz.

(*Rubs stomach and throws kiss after her.*)

TOM. Well, we might as well see who the letters are from while she is gone. (*Opens first one and reads it.*)

BOB (*at door*). I hope she hurries.

JERRY. So do I.

TOM. Hurray! Some luck at last.

(*Grabs* JERRY *and* BOB *and waltzes them around.* JERRY *trips on account of big trousers.*)

JERRY. Cut it out. Cut it out. Do you want me to break my neck in these confounded pants?

BOB. What's all the excitement?

TOM (*hands him letter*). Read that.

BOB (*reading*). "My dear nephew: It has been some time since I heard from you, but ——"

TOM. Skip that. (*Pointing.*) Read here.

BOB (*reading*). "And when your father's papers were opened I found a letter addressed to myself, instructing that it be opened a week before your twenty-fifth birthday."

TOM. That was a week ago to-day. I am twenty-five to-day.

BOB (*reading*). "When the letter was opened it instructed that I go to a certain bank and remove from a vault a package which I was to deliver to you. This package I have expressed to you and no doubt you have received it ere this."

TOM. That's the lost money, I know it.

JERRY. Maybe it's bonds or something like that.

BOB (*reading*). "Thinking things over after I had expressed the package to you, I came to the conclusion that I hadn't treated you just the best for the last three years and I made up my mind I would come and see you in New York ——"

TOM (*grabbing letter*). What's that? I didn't get that far. (*Reads.*) "Come and see you in New York and we'll straighten things out to your advantage. You can expect me on your birthday. With love from your Uncle Will." Holy Ginger! This is awful. I wouldn't have him come into this bare room for a million dollars, after the line of bunk I've been giving him.

BOB. Wait until the package comes. Perhaps there is something in that that will help out.

TOM. But I can't wait. He says he will be here on

my birthday. This is my birthday. Good Lord! He may be here any moment. (*Walks around much excited.*)

Bob. Read the other one. Maybe it's from Aunt Alice. There might even be a check in it.

Jerry. Check. That sounds good.

Tom (*opens letter*). By George. It is from her. (*Reads.*) "Am enclosing a check for twenty-five dollars as a little reminder that I haven't forgotten you."

Jerry. Bully for Aunt Alice!

Tom (*reading*). "And now, my dear boy, I am going to surprise you by coming to see you. I have been promising myself this pleasure ever since you have been in New York but have never had the opportunity before now. My ward, Elaine, is going to New York to meet her husband who is returning from France and I shall accompany her. You can expect us on your birthday." (*Putting hand to forehead.*) My God! (*Reading.*) "I am so anxious to meet your dear wife. I know I shall love her. Sincerely, Aunt Alice." Oh, this is awful. (*Sinks on box.*)

Bob. Your wife? What in blazes is she talking about?

Jerry. Yes, produce her. I've never made the lady's acquaintance either.

Tom. That's what a fellow gets for lying. I wanted to straighten up my bills before I went to France, and the Lord knows I had enough of them, so I wrote Aunt Alice that I was getting married in hopes that she would send me a check, which she did, a good substantial one, too. I was going to tell her about things when I got back but I forgot all about it.

Bob. If she finds this out she is liable to cut you out of her will.

Tom (*dejectedly*). It will be good for me if she does.

Jerry. But what's the use of her finding out?

Tom. How can she help it? (*Gets up and looks around.*) Imagine me entertaining Uncle Will and Aunt Alice in this room, after me writing I was getting along good, had a nice comfortable home. (*Sits on box with head in hands.*) Oh, Lord, it's awful.

JERRY. You surely have got yourself in a nice scrape.

MRS. R. (*enters* C. D.). Here's a package the expressman just left for you so I brought it right up. I thought as how it might be something from your uncle. You know you owe me thirty-two dollars and you wouldn't forget a poor lone widdy woman as has no one to help her but a good-for-nothing darter and ——

(TOM *shoves her out* C. D., *and closes the door.*)

TOM (*with package*). Dear old Dad! I know this is something good. Oh, if it can only help me out of this scrape I'm in I'll—I'll—well, I'll never tell another lie as long as I live. (*Opens package,* BOB *and* JERRY *crowding around.*) Why, there's nothing here but an old rug. (*Feels around in box and throws rug on the floor.*) Yes, here's a letter. I know there's something in this. (*Opens letter and reads.*) "My dear son." Dear old Dad.

JERRY. Hurry up and read it.

TOM. Can't you wait a minute? (*Reads.*) "My dear son."

JERRY. You did read that.

BOB. Shut up, Jerry, for Heaven's sake. Go on, Tom.

TOM (*reading*). "As you have often heard, when I was young your Uncle Will and I did quite a lot of traveling in China. On one of our trips, while down near the Thibetan border, we heard of a wonderful rug, known as the Rug of Truth, the peculiar qualities of which were that any one standing on it must tell the truth, whether he would or not, stating exactly what was in his mind."

BOB. Sounds like the Arabian Nights.

TOM (*reading*). "I determined to see the rug, which I did, and with the aid of several Chinese and a rascally old Thibetan monk, I obtained possession of it. That is the treasure I am having delivered to you on this your twenty-fifth birthday. Guard it and keep it, as it is priceless. It will be the means of bringing you wonder-

ful luck. May God bless you, my son, is the prayer of your old Dad."

(Tom *turns with letter in his hand and goes to window.*)

Jerry. Let's see this wonderful rug.

(*Spreads it on the floor in front of box* C.)

Bob. Looks like something that the cat brought in.

Jerry. It sure isn't much on looks. I wonder how it feels to step on it. (*Steps on the rug.*) The darned old fake. Any one that would swallow a yarn like that must be a bally idiot. Believe me I don't put much stock in it. If it was mine I would sell it to the junk man. (*Jumps off rug with a dazed expression on his face.*) Holy Mackerel! What did I say?

Bob (*laughing*). Nothing much. Only told the truth as to what was in your mind. I'm beginning to believe in it. (*Examines rug closely.*)

Tom (*coming down* C.). Not much that can be made out of that, is there? (*Points to rug.*)

Jerry. Not unless you use it as a talisman. You know your father's letter stated it would bring you good luck. I wish some of it would materialize. I'm hungry.

Tom. The rug of truth may be my lucky talisman, which I doubt, but how is that going to prevent Aunt Alice and Uncle Will from finding out I'm a liar?

Liz (*enters* C. D. *with food which she places on box*). There's a nice piece of ham and some bread, but I hadn't time to get any coffee. Here's a little fruit too. Help yourself. (*All help themselves and eat.*)

Tom. Liz, you certainly have been our good fairy.

Liz. Aw forgit it! I'd do a darn sight more than that for you, Mr. Tom. (*Steps on rug.*) All that puzzles me is why you starve paintin' pictures when you could make a good livin' driving a laundry wagon. (*Boys all laugh.*) What's eatin' you?

Tom. Nothing, Liz, nothing. You told the truth, that's all. Why do I do it?

JERRY. Here! I got an idea. (*To* LIZ.) You say you would do anything for Mr. Denker? Here's your chance. Mr. Denker needs a wife, needs one bad. In fact, must have one right away. How would you like to help him out for a few days?

LIZ. Who? Me?

JERRY. Yes, you! Pose as his wife for a couple of days and help him out.

LIZ. Go on, you're full of Peruna. What do you think I am? You have rats in your belfry.

(*Picks up broom and begins sweeping.*)

TOM. Oh, Liz, if you only would! I *must* have a wife for the next two or three days or I stand to lose my chance of a fortune and be found out as a confirmed liar into the bargain. Now, I'll tell you how it is. My uncle from Keokuk, Iowa ——

LIZ. Where's that? In Africa?

TOM. No, no. Right here in the United States. My uncle from Keokuk is coming here to-day to make me a visit. I have been writing him that I have been doing fine since I have been in New York, that I have all the orders for paintings I can handle, that I have a nice studio and so on.

LIZ. Well, what of it? What's that got to do with you getting a wife?

TOM. But that isn't all. I received another letter to-day (*shows it to her*) from my Aunt Alice of Taunton, Massachusetts, stating that she was coming to spend a few days with me and wants to meet my wife.

LIZ (*much mystified*). But I can't see where I'm in on it. If you think jest cause me mother runs a boardin' house I ain't got no sense, you can take it from me, kid, you're barking up the wrong tree. (*Sweeps.*)

BOB. Be a sport, Liz. Help him out.

JERRY. Sure thing. His uncle has all kinds of money and there will be automobile rides and excursions and ——

TOM. Go on, Liz, please. You've always been a friend of mine.

LIZ. But you can't have company in this place. Why you ain't even got a chair to sit down on.

TOM. Lord, I hadn't thought of that.

JERRY. Borrow another apartment from the old lady. She has some spare ones, no doubt.

BOB. Sure. Everybody on this floor has gone on account of Mrs. Slosson's kid getting the measles.

LIZ. What are you talking about? Borry anything from mother for a couple of guys what owes her room rent? I could hear her start the widow's lament. Nothing doing for me. No, siree.

TOM. But look here. I received a check from Aunt Alice and maybe if I give her that she would agree. You see if I get this thing straightened out and my uncle thinks I am doing all right and my aunt doesn't catch me in a lie about my wife ——

LIZ. But how did you get into such a mess? What did you say you had a wife for if you haven't?

TOM. That's too long to tell you just now. Oh, Liz, my life and fortune are in your hands. Help me out.

LIZ. Well, put that feed away and I'll go and bring Ma. I'll do what she says, but I can hear her now shootin' off about her Ahenobarbus, her dear, departed first. [*Exit*, C.

TOM. Suppose she refuses. Suppose she won't help me out.

JERRY. Suppose a cow won't eat grass. Do you think she will turn you down with the prospects of getting her back rent and a little more besides? *I* know the old lady.

BOB. If you can get things straightened up for the time being you can steer your aunt and uncle away in a couple of days and no one will be any the wiser.

TOM. Suppose Mrs. Reese does agree. Just think of the kind of a wife that girl will make. And her name, Liz! Oh, this is an awful mess.

(*Walks back and forth on stage.*)

JERRY. Now don't say anything about Liz. She's some girl I'll tell the world.

LIZ (*heard outside* C. D.). Aw, come on, I tell you.

Nobody ain't a-goin' to eat you. Come on in. (*Enters* C. D., *followed by* MRS. R.) It's a business proposition he wants to see you about.

MRS. R. If you're trying to get me to let 'em stay after to-morrow night without paying, I says no! You gotta eat, ain't you? And you gotta have money to do it, ain't you? I said they git out and out they gits. I think it's awful. Me a poor lone widdy woman with a good-for-nothing darter and a dog and a polly to take care of and roomers as won't pay their rent. Oh, things wasn't like this when poor dear Ahenobarbus was alive, him as was my first.

(*Sits on box,* C., *and cries into apron.*)

LIZ. Didn't I tell you?

TOM (*makes face at* JERRY *and then goes and pats* MRS. R. *on the shoulder*). There, there, Mrs. Reese, I'm sure if Ahenobarbus ——

MRS. R. (*shouting*). Hey?

TOM. If Ahenobarbus was here no doubt things would be different. And now, Mrs. Reese, I would like to make a proposition to you. I received a letter from my uncle to-day, also one from my aunt stating they intended making a visit to New York to see me.

MRS. R. Well, what's to prevent 'em?

TOM. But you see, Mrs. Reese, I have nothing in my room, no furniture ——

MRS. R. Well, that ain't my fault. If young men insists on painting pictures instead of goin' out and workin' for their livin' it ain't none of my business.

TOM (*taking check from his pocket*). Now, my aunt sent me a check for twenty-five dollars ——

MRS. R. (*jumping up smiling*). Oh, now, Mr. Denker. Just as though I didn't know you would pay your rent. You mustn't mind anything I say. (*Grabs check from* TOM, *turns and puts it in her stocking.*) You see with all the things I has to go through with and the thoughts of my poor dear Ahenobarbus, it's a wonder things isn't worse than they are. Oh, Henny dear, if you was only with me.

(*Cries aloud in apron, all trying to comfort her.*)

LIZ (*very unconcerned, shakes her mother's shoulder*). Cut it out, Ma. Cut it out. Save some for the next fellow as owes you something.

MRS. R. (*getting up*). Oh, you impident, good-for-nothing ——

LIZ. Mr. Denker wants to tell you something if you turn off the water works long enough to give him a chance.

TOM. Now, Mrs. Reese, as I was saying, my aunt and uncle are coming to visit me. I have written my uncle that I have a nice studio in a good location and am doing very well.

MRS. R. Well, I ain't responsible for any lies you tell.

TOM. And as for Aunt Alice—well, you remember when I squared up with you? Before I went to France?

MRS. R. Yes, and I did say to myself where did he get the money?

TOM. I was going over there and I thought perhaps I would never come back so I wrote and told my aunt I was married ——

MRS. R. Married! Married! (*Looks all around room.*) Where's your wife? You ain't a-runnin' her in on me, are you? Understand, if there's another one in this room I raise the rent three dollars a week.

LIZ. Aw, Ma, don't butt in so much. Give the guy a chanct, can't you? Don't be gabbin' all the time.

MRS. R. You jest shut up. I'm a-running this house and I want you to understand it.

TOM (*to* JERRY). I don't seem to be making very much headway. Perhaps you could handle her a little better.

JERRY. It's this way, Mrs. Reese ——

MRS. R. When did you git back? And for the land's sake, where did you git them there clothes?

JERRY. Mr. Denker isn't really married. He simply told his aunt he was so he could get something to pay you with before he went to France.

BOB. Yes, I call it pretty nice of him to try to straighten things up like he did.

JERRY. Now his aunt is coming to see him and he must have a wife.

MRS. R. Well, what have I got to do with it? (*Stops and simpers.*) Oh, Mr. Denker, you ain't a-proposin' to me, are you?

TOM (*startled*). Good Lord, I should say not.

MRS. R. Hey?

TOM. Why, I thought—that is—well, I thought possibly considering that this means so much to me, you might be willing to let me have the use of this floor while they are here, considering that there is no one on it.

MRS. R. What! Loan you the whole floor? Well, I should say not. Here you are and here you stays until my rent is paid. The idea!

LIZ. Aw, Ma, loosen up and surprise yourself for onct. He can't hurt it.

MRS. R. No! What I says I means. Here he stays until his rent is paid.

TOM. Well, then, will you give me enough furniture to make this room at least habitable while my aunt and uncle are here, and I thought also that—that ——

(*Looks at* JERRY *and motions him to explain.*)

JERRY. He thought that maybe you would—you would—you would —— (*Looks at* BOB.)

BOB. Why, he thought that—that is—he thought—he thought ——

LIZ. Well, she's sure got youse guys' goat, all right, all right. (*To* MRS. R.) It's this way, Ma. Mr. Denker must have a wife and seein' as how I'm such a bright and beautiful Jane he wants to know if he can borry me along with the floor for the next two or three days until his swell relations has went.

MRS. R. What! I never heard of such a thing. Why, the idea! Oh, I never was so insulted in all my life. Oh, if poor dear Ahenobarbus was only here, him as was me first. *He* wouldn't let his beloved Mehetibelly be talked to like this. Oh! Oh! Oh!

(*Sits on box* C. *and cries.*)

LIZ. There goes the water works again. (*To* MRS. R.)

Turn it off, Ma, turn it off. No one's insultin' you. Mr. Denker just wants me to *act* as his wife until his aunt and uncle leave. He'll make it all right with you, won't you, Mr. Denker? (*To* Tom.) Say yes.

Tom. How can I? She took all the money I had.

Mrs. R. Make it all right? Make it all right? Here I am a respectable widdy woman with a good-for-nothing ——

Jerry. Oh, good Lord, don't give us that litany again. (*Shoves his hands in pants pockets. Look of amazement comes over face. Pulls roll of bills from pants pocket.*) Well, what do you think of that? (*To* Bob.) Don't you wish you had changed? The guy that owned this suit didn't go through his pockets very good before he sold it, did he? Here, Tom, give her something and shut her everlasting mouth.

(*Hands* Tom *a bill from roll.*)

Tom. You see, Mrs. Reese, if this goes through all right I stand to win quite a lot by it. Now I am perfectly willing to settle up all my back rent and give you a nice little remuneration besides, for I am about the only heir my aunt or uncle has ——

Mrs. R. (*smiling and taking bill*). Just as though I didn't know an honest man when I see one. (*Steps on rug.*) Jest the same, nothing but the money would make me do it. I consider this as something special for the occasion and not your rent, understand. If you hadn't done something I was goin' to kick you out to-morrow night. (*Steps off rug and rubs forehead dazedly.*) What did I say?

Bob. Just told us something that we all knew right along.

Tom. And now it's all fixed, is it?

Mrs. R. You're sure you have the money?

Tom. Well, I—I ——

Bob. Sure he has. (*To* Tom.) Tell her anything. Your uncle evidently has a change of heart. He'll come across now that he is coming to New York especially to see you.

TOM. Oh, yes, yes, Mrs. Reese, I'll settle up everything.

MRS. R. (*to* LIZ). What'll Bing say?

LIZ (*tossing her head*). Humph! Jest because Bing's been me steady for the last two years don't give him no right to butt in. I'll attend to Bing all right, all right. Leave him to me. (*To* TOM.) I believe I'm going to enjoy this mixin' in high society. (*Affectedly.*) Yas. I'm Mrs. Thomas Denker. Yas. We just returned from Palm Beach. Yas. I think we'll remain in Noo Yawk for a while. Yas ——

TOM. Oh, stop it, Liz, please, and let's get busy and get something in here before they come. They may be here any moment.

JERRY (*with roll of bills in his hand, starts for door*). Well, this buys me a new suit.

TOM (*stopping him*). Not on your life. We must have a little on hand. Hang on to it. By Jove, I believe that old rug is bringing me luck.

(LIZ *and* MRS. R. *talking back, pointing as to where to place things, etc.*)

JERRY. But I can't meet any one in these togs.

BOB. Wear your overcoat.

JERRY. It's easy enough for you to talk. You got a good suit out of the deal, but look what I pulled up.

BOB. Well, wear your overcoat, I said.

JERRY. Who the devil wants to wear an overcoat in the house?

BOB. I should worry and get a headache over it.

TOM (*drawing both* JERRY *and* BOB *toward him*). Now we'll have to arrange this thing so that we will all tell the same story. I'll tell my visitors that you (*points to* BOB) are sharing my rooms with me and that Jerry has just returned from France and will also be here for a few days. Thank God he was here or we would never have gotten hold of that roll. (*Stoops and pats rug.*) Old rug, you're some friend.

JERRY. But my clothes? I can't see anybody wearing these clothes.

TOM. Oh, I'll tell them you had the "flu" while in France and when you put on your civilian clothes they didn't fit.

JERRY (*holding waist of pants out*). Had the flu? I could put a flue, yes, and a cook-stove in here, and they still wouldn't fit.

MRS. R. Now, I think as how we can put the table there. (*Points* C.) Although what you're ever gonna get to put on it to eat I don't know.

TOM. I thought you might allow us to use your dining-room under the circumstances.

MRS. R. Positively no! I've went as far as I intend. But there is a kitchenette there (*points* R.) that I'll let you have the use of. I'll furnish the furniture and you do the rest. But remember, it's only for a few days.

BOB (*to* JERRY). You don't want to be seen. You can be the cook.

JERRY. About the first thing I would do would be bang you over the head with a skillet.

TOM. But Mrs. Reese, how can I entertain them here in this small place, eat and sleep and ——

MRS. R. Send 'em to a hotel. I've done all I intend.

JERRY (*kissing bank roll*). Good-bye, old greenbacks.

MRS. R. Come on, Liz, and I'll show you what they can have. Oh, I never did think I would stoop to this, actin' a lie in this way. If it hadn't been for you, Liz ——

LIZ. Oh, Ma, you make me tired. Come on, Mr. Bob, we might as well git busy and bring the stuff in.

[BOB, LIZ *and* MRS. R. *exeunt* C.

JERRY. Well, the old lady took it better than I expected.

TOM. But suppose I am found out? And good Lord, Jerry, must I introduce Liz as my wife? What will my aunt think of me?

JERRY. Just think what she would think of you if she finds out you have lied to her.

TOM. But her language, her dress and ——

LIZ (*at* C. D. *with* BOB, *carrying large floor rug*). Come on, old sport. Hump yourself. Watch the curves. Put

on the brakes. (*To* TOM.) Move the mahogany center table. (TOM *moves box* C. *to the back.*) Now then, here we are. (*They spread rug center of floor.*) Oh, man, don't it look grand? Yes, it don't. She picked the oldest and skinniest one in the whole house.

BING (*at* C. D. *with small table*). Your mother said as how I was to bring this up to the gent's room. Where'll I put it? [BOB *exits,* C. D.

LIZ. Well, Bing Dickson! What are you doing around here this time of day?

BING. Aw, I lost me job. The guy what's above me got jealous of the way the skirts was a-shinin' up to me and he fired me. Then I dropped in to see you and the old lady said to bring this up.

LIZ. Huh! If you ain't huntin' a job you're gettin' fired from one. Put the table there (*points back* C.) and then beat it back and get the pictures. (BING *places table and exits* C. D.) Now what else do we need?

TOM. Some chairs and a table for the center and some pictures and—oh, you know. Anything to make the place look decent.

(BING *enters with some pictures.*)

BING. Where'll I put these?

LIZ. Any place. Stick 'em down and then beat it back for the rest of the things. (*To* JERRY.) Now you get busy and put up the pictures. The nails ought to be up for the ones he took down and hocked. If I don't hurry me relatives'll be here before I get the house fixed up. You, Mr. Tom, I mean Tom, I guess I can call me husband by his first name, you run along to me boudwar, you know, the place where I hits the hay, and git all the curtains and things and bring them here. Now, hustle. (TOM *exits* C.; *to* JERRY.) Well, how are you makin' out?

JERRY. Pretty good. You're some hustler, Liz. I mean, Mrs. Denker.

LIZ. That's better. (*Stands off and looks at pictures.*) Holy Hat! If they didn't go and bring the picture of

poor dear Ahenobarbus in, him as was her first. Now, there'll be ructions. Oh, but ain't he a beaut?

(*Points near window* R., *where picture of man should be hung.*)

JERRY. Isn't he your father?

LIZ. Not so's you could notice it. I'm the daughter of her second husband. She's only me stepmother.

BING (*enters* C. D. *with* BOB, *carrying table*). Watch your step, old timer. Don't bump against the door or the old lady'll beat you a bump on the bean.

BOB. Watch your own end and don't boss so much.

BING. I'm a-watchin' all right.

LIZ. Quit your scrapping and bring in the table. (*They place table* C.) That's right. (TOM *enters with curtains, etc.*) Jest in time, sweetheart.

BING (*quickly*). What's that?

LIZ. Fade away, young man, fade away. You are now speaking to Mrs. Thomas Denker, do you get me?

BING (*stepping up to* TOM). Why, you big stiff. She's me girl, I'll ——

LIZ (*stepping between them*). Here, you Bing. Don't get reckless. Come on out and I'll tell you all about it. (*Waving hand to* TOM.) Ta, ta, Snookums. Come with us, Jerry dear, and we'll get the rest of the things.

[LIZ, BING *and* JERRY *exeunt* C.

TOM. Bob, this is awful. I've half a notion to back out of it. (*Auto heard outside.*) Great Heavens! That must be one of them. (*Both rush to window.*) That's Uncle Will. We just got things fixed in time. Oh, Bob, I'm all in a tremble. I know we will give it away, I know we will.

BOB. Buck up, buck up. Remember, everything is at stake. Jerry and I are on hand and we'll help you out. You bring him up and then I'll go out and line up the rest of them.

(*Shoves* TOM *toward* C. *door as door opens and* MRS. REESE *enters followed by* UNCLE WILL.)

MRS. R. Here's a man as says he's your uncle, and ——

UNCLE (*shoving her aside*). My boy, my boy!

TOM. Uncle Will! (*They embrace.*)

MRS. R. (*wiping her eyes with her apron*). Ain't it grand! Dear Mr. Tom. He always was my favorite.

UNCLE (*looking around room*). Well, well, well. So this is my boy's studio. Where are all the paintings you wrote me about?

TOM (*embarrassed*). Why, you see, I—they ——

BOB. He sent them out to take a bath.

UNCLE. And who is this?

TOM. This is my friend, Mr. Mills, just returned from France. He is stopping with me for a few days.

UNCLE (*shaking hands with* BOB). France! Ah, my boy, you had a great opportunity, a great opportunity. (*To* TOM.) I never felt prouder of you, my boy, than when I heard you had enlisted. Just what I would have done had I been twenty years younger. And, now, my boy, how are you getting along? Haven't heard from you for a long time. Possibly it was my fault but I tried to do things for the best. I tried to do things for the best always.

TOM. Oh, I have been doing fairly well. (*Motions* MRS. REESE *to go. She has been listening very intently to all the conversation.*) I have several orders ahead of me at present and am getting along pretty good.

UNCLE (*steps on rug*). Glad to hear of it, my boy, glad to hear of it. And now I want to tell you the truth about your father's money. You see it was just like this; (*steps off rug*) it was a case of—of—of —— What *was* I saying?

TOM (*excited*). You were going to tell me the truth about father's money.

UNCLE. The truth? Did I say that? Well, what could I have had in mind? Never mind, it will come back to me. (*Sits at table.*) And now, my boy, a little drink of something, I suppose you still have some, wouldn't go amiss.

MRS. R. What's that? What's that? A drink? Not in my house ——.

(TOM *puts his hand over her mouth and* BOB *gets between her and* UNCLE.)

TOM. Surely, Uncle, I'll send right out for it. (*To* MRS. R.) For heaven's sake don't spoil it now.

MRS. R. But I'm a member of the church and I don't allow any drinking in my house!

UNCLE. What's that? Isn't this your house, Tom? Who is this woman? What does she mean? How can she give orders in your house?

TOM. This woman is—is ——

BOB. His housekeeper. I'll attend to your lunch. (*To* TOM.) Leave her to me. I'll dig up Jerry and get the cash and arrange for everything. Don't worry.

[*Exit* C. D. *with* MRS. R., *she protesting.*

UNCLE. A very peculiar woman for a housekeeper, I must say. You would think she owned the place.

BING (*enters* C. *with suitcase followed by* AUNT *and* ELAINE). Here's a woman as says she's Mr. Denker's aunt. Where'll I put the trunk?

TOM. Any place. (BING *puts suitcase* L. *and exits* C.) Aunt Alice! I can't tell you how glad I am to see you.

AUNT. My dear Tom! (*Kisses him.*) How France has improved you. This is my ward, Elaine. I want you to be friends.

TOM. I am very glad to meet you.

(*Shakes hands with* ELAINE.)

ELAINE. And I you, Mr. Denker, as I have heard Aunt Alice speak of you so much.

TOM. Aunt Alice, I believe you are acquainted with Uncle Will.

AUNT. Will Denker! I thought I couldn't be mistaken. After all these years. (*They shake hands.*)

UNCLE. I was wondering if you would recognize me. I knew you the minute you came in. You look just the same.

(ELAINE *and* TOM *go back.*)

AUNT. Same old Will. Flattering an old lady of fifty-two. As though I could look the same after twenty, no, it's thirty years.

UNCLE. No, you look the same, not a day older. (*Steps on rug.*) Except that your hair's gray and there are crow's feet under your eyes and you are getting fat. (*Steps off rug.*) Good Lord! What have I been saying?

AUNT. Mr. Denker! I don't permit comments on my personal appearance even from as old a friend as you.

UNCLE (*pleading*). Alice, please forgive me. I mean nothing by what I said. Don't let us quarrel again. I have never forgotten you. To me you have always been little Alice King.

AUNT. I suppose you hardly ever spoke to your *wife* of little Alice King.

UNCLE. My wife? Good Lord, I never had one. (JERRY *enters with tray containing lunch and two bottles of wine.*) Ah! a lunch. Nothing like a good lunch to rest one after a long journey.

TOM. Yes, sit down. (*They all sit at table.*)

AUNT (*looking at* JERRY). What a peculiar costume for a butler.

JERRY. A butler. I'm not a butler. I never buttled in my life. I am ——

TOM. The cook. The butler's off to-day. Odd, Aunt Alice, how you should get the cook mixed up with the butler. Jerry, pour the wine.

(JERRY, *very indignant, pours the wine and spills some of it on* UNCLE.)

UNCLE (*jumping up from table*). Here, here, here. Look what you are doing. Tom, what do you keep such a careless man as that for? I do believe he has ruined my suit.

TOM. Well, you see, Uncle, he has just got back from France and has been sick. Went down something awful. Lost about seventy-five pounds. That's the reason his

clothes are such an odd fit. Always believe in taking care of the boys who have been across. Have a sandwich. (*Offers* UNCLE *a sandwich.*)

JERRY (*shaking fist at* TOM). Oh, you ungrateful pup! And me putting up the money for the feed. Just you wait.

TOM (*rising and taking* JERRY L.). Don't be sore, old man. I couldn't do anything else. I had to make some kind of an answer. Now be a good sport and go out and find Liz. Aunt Alice will be asking about her next. And for God's sake tell her to cut out the slang and put on a neat dress and put her hair up half way decent. Please, that's a good fellow.

JERRY (*relenting*). I'll help you out this time but I think it was a shabby trick to play on me. The cook! First time I was ever taken for a cook, and me a captain in the army.

TOM. Forget it. There's a good fellow. I'm so mixed up I don't know what I am doing. Help me out. It will only be for a few days.

JERRY. Oh, I suppose I'll have to. [*Exit,* C.

UNCLE. Really, Tom, I think you have the most peculiar servants. The first thing I would do would be to discharge that housekeeper. I don't like her attitude. And that cook was a little too independent for a man in his position.

AUNT. Will, you shouldn't take such notions into your head. I thought the cook was a real nice looking fellow. He looked to me like some one who was really above his position. And now, Tom, I would like to meet your wife and then Elaine and I must be off. We have to meet the Cordonia this afternoon. Elaine's husband is on it. He is just returning from France.

ELAINE. Really, Aunt Alice, you are making too much of a fuss over me. I can easily meet the steamer myself.

AUNT. Allow a young girl like you to go among such a crowd unaccompanied? No, indeed. I shall go with you, my dear.

ELAINE. But Aunt Alice ——

AUNT. Not another word. It is all settled. And

now, Tom, where *is* your wife? I am *so* anxious to meet her. I'll never forget the description you gave of her when you wrote and told me you were married.

UNCLE. The rascal! He never told me anything about it at all.

AUNT. She's tall, dark hair, large expressive brown eyes, low contralto voice (TOM *much perturbed over the description*), shy and retired, and a great musician. There; I think I have all her accomplishments down pat. Am I not right, Tom?

TOM (*wiping forehead and collar with handkerchief*). Y-y-y-yes.

AUNT. Where did you meet her? Oh, yes, yes, I remember, now. She's the daughter of one of your patrons; father is a writer. See, I remember everything you told me about her.

ELAINE. Mr. Denker evidently is a lucky man.

TOM (*aside*). Yes, he is.

JERRY (*enters* C. D. *and whispers to* TOM). She's coming and wait until you see her. She has on some regalia. Oh, boy! Prepare for the worst.

TOM. Didn't you tell her what I told you to?

JERRY. Oh, I told her all right but this is evidently Liz's chance to doll up and believe me she's dolled.

LIZ (*enters* C. D., *extravagantly dressed, hair done up in extreme fashion, slit skirt, etc. Speaks very affectedly*). Thomas, introduce me to your auntie.

(TOM *motions to her to keep quiet.*)

TOM. Aunt Alice, I want to tell you—that is—— Well, you see, Aunt Alice——

LIZ (*getting angry*). Well, spit it out! What's eatin' you? Git it out of your system. Nobody's goin' to bite you.

TOM. For heaven's sake! Watch your language.

LIZ. Me language? What's the matter with it? It's the same kind I always use. (*Looks around and notices every one staring at her.*) What are you all gaping at? Is everybody gone nuts?

AUNT. Who is this—this person?

LIZ (*now very angry*). Person! Person! I ain't a person. I'm a goil, a decent respectable goil, and I'm just as good as you are. And if you want to know who I am, me name's Denker, Mrs. Thomas Denker, Liz for short. What have you got to say about it?

(*Puts hands on hips and glares defiantly at* AUNT.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

The scene is the same. As curtain goes up, AUNT *is sitting with head on table* C. *sobbing,* ELAINE *patting her on shoulder.*

ELAINE. There, there, Auntie dear, Mr. Denker can explain things, I feel sure he can.

AUNT (*raising head*). Explain! Explain! How *can* he explain that awful creature being his wife? I'll never forget her or that horrible name, Liz. "Liz for short." Oh, Tom, Tom, how could you? (*Cries.*)

ELAINE. But Aunt Alice, if she suits *him* ——

AUNT. How could she? Tom is a gentleman. Didn't you notice how embarrassed he was when she came into the room and his efforts to explain things? I thought there was something suspicious about it when she wasn't there to welcome me. He is ashamed of her, I know it. Oh, why did he marry her? And I had such plans for him. He told me she was so sweet and kind and good. The daughter of a writer! Imagine any one with the education and the ability to write things having a daughter like that.

ELAINE. I feel sure Mr. Denker can make the proper explanation when the time comes. After all, Aunt Alice, she is *his* wife. He evidently was satisfied with her or he wouldn't have married her.

AUNT (*drying her eyes*). It may be that you are right. But think of her language and dress. She will be a drag on him as long as she lives. I had intended asking him to spend the summer with me in Taunton but imagine me introducing her to my friends. "Liz for short." Ugh!

ELAINE. Where is Mr. Denker? (*Sitting* L. *of table.*)

AUNT. He took that awful creature to her room and then he and his uncle went to see about the Cordonia's arrival. After all, my dear, we must not forget our

principal reason for coming to New York. Even though I was terribly disappointed when you married so suddenly, we must make your husband's home-coming as happy as we can. It is a duty we owe our boys. But your marriage was quite a shock to me, my dear. I had an idea that I could arrange a match between you and Tom, but now —— (*Sobs.*)

ELAINE. Please, Aunt Alice.

AUNT. I never could understand how you, so backward and shy that we could never even get you to attend a dance, could hurry off and get married like you did. It was almost as great a disappointment to me as Tom's marriage. Is your husband one of the Boston Mills, or was he just visiting in Boston when you met him?

ELAINE. I—I think he is from some place in Ohio but I—I am not sure.

AUNT. Elaine, you do try my patience! Every time I question you about your husband you stammer and blush and put me off with evasive answers as though you were ashamed of him. Are you?

ELAINE. Oh, no, no! But you see, I—I —— (*Goes to* AUNT *and lays head on her knees, sobbing.*) Oh, Aunt Alice, I'm so miserable.

AUNT (*patting her head*). There, there, my dear; forgive me. I suppose I'm a cantankerous, cranky old maid. I'll see that he is good to you, so never fear. I promised your dead mother I would look after you and I intend doing it.

ANGELA (*at* C. D.). I beg your pardon. I called to see Mr. Mills and the landlady told me to come right up.

ELAINE (*rising hurriedly*). Mr. Mills!

AUNT (*as* ANGELA *comes forward*). You needn't be so surprised, Elaine. There are other men in the world by the name of Mills besides your husband. My niece was married just previous to the war and as her husband was called away very suddenly and they only had a few days together, she is naturally much interested in his name.

ANGELA (*smiling*). Oh, I understand. I called to see Mr. Bob Mills.

ELAINE. Bob Mills! Why—why—does a man by that name live here?

ANGELA. Yes, Bob Mills, a magazine writer.

AUNT. How queer. That's Elaine's husband's name.

ANGELA. That is odd. The Mr. Mills I refer to came from Zanesville, Ohio.

ELAINE. Zanesville!

(*Sinks in chair by table in faint.*)

AUNT (*going to* ELAINE). Quick! My smelling salts in my hand-bag there on the table. Hurry!

(*Takes salts which* ANGELA *hands to her and they revive* ELAINE.)

ELAINE. Oh, Aunt Alice, take me away from here, take me away quick. I must go, really I must.

(*Tries to get up.*)

AUNT. Now, dear, just lie back in this chair and rest a while. The trip was too much for you.

ANGELA. And you say you are married to Bob Mills of Zanesville, Ohio?

AUNT. Of course she is. What business is it of yours, I should like to know.

ANGELA. None at all, only when Mr. Mills returns please tell him that Angela Scott called to see him and had the pleasure(?) of meeting his wife. (*Bows.*) Good afternoon. [*Exit*, C. D.

AUNT. Now what on earth is the matter with that girl?

ELAINE. Oh, take me home, Auntie, please do.

AUNT. Not until we meet your husband, which reminds me, I can't understand why you came to New York to meet the Cordonia if your husband is already here.

ELAINE. But I didn't want to come. It was you insisted that I should. I told you Mr. Mills would come to me in good time, but ever since I told you of my marriage you have planned on coming to meet him when he returned. Why couldn't you leave me in peace?

AUNT. You are beyond me, Elaine. I can't understand you lately. For the past year you have been so full

of notions and caprices that you have sorely tried my patience.

ELAINE (*going to* AUNT). Forgive me, please. I don't know what I am saying. You have been most kind to me and I do appreciate it very, very much.

TOM (*enters* C. D.). The Cordonia docks at six o'clock.

AUNT (*stiffly*). Thank you. Where is—is—Elizabeth?

TOM. Oh, Aunt Alice, I know you are terribly disappointed, but I ——

AUNT. Don't apologize for your wife. You married her, now stick up for her.

TOM. Oh, yes, yes, of course, but ——

(ELAINE *goes to window.*)

AUNT. Why did you write and tell me what a beautiful girl she was? Her large expressive brown eyes, her low contralto voice, her —— Oh, Tom, how could you?

TOM (*going toward her and stepping on rug as* BOB *enters* C. D.). I'll tell you why I did it, Aunt Alice, I'll tell you the exact truth. It was this way: It was absolutely necessary that I have a wife and ——

BOB. Tom! Look where you are standing.

TOM (*jumping off rug*). Damn that rug.

AUNT. Tom! No profanity, please. Why should you swear at the poor inoffensive rug? *It* had nothing to do with you being in the position you are in. (*Steps on rug and looks at it.*) It's just like any other rug. And now, my dear boy, I am going to tell you exactly what is on my mind. *You* are going to get a divorce.

TOM. Oh, but Aunt Alice, I can't.

AUNT. Don't talk back to me. I have my mind all set on it. I know you are not happy. You just come in here and we will talk it all over. (*Starts* R.)

TOM. But Aunt Alice, I can't get a divorce. It is absolutely impossible.

AUNT. Oh, no it isn't. Nothing is impossible to those who make up their minds. How could a man be a success as an artist with a wife by the name of Liz! That's enough excuse for any one. Now come right along and we will fix it all up. [*They exit* R., TOM *protesting.*

BOB. Well, I see a rocky road ahead for old Tom. I wonder what *would* have happened if he hadn't got off that confounded rug.

(*Goes to rug and touches it gingerly with his foot.*)

ELAINE (*coming front*). Are you Mr. Mills?

BOB. Yes. I believe you are Aunt Alice's niece.

ELAINE. No, not her real niece; she just calls me that. My mother died several years ago and I have been living with her ever since. Might I ask your—your Christian name?

BOB (*looks at her surprised*). Certainly. It's Bob.

ELAINE. Oh! (*Stifles sob and turns away.*)

BOB. What is the matter, Miss—I beg your pardon but I didn't get your name.

ELAINE. Lynne, Elaine Lynne. Are you from Zanesville, Ohio?

BOB. Yes, I am, but I don't think I have met you before, Miss Lynne.

ELAINE. Oh, Mr. Mills, I am in an awful predicament and there is no one can help me out of it but you. Say you will help me, please do. (*Goes to him.*)

BOB. I'll be only too glad to do anything in my power for you. Come over here and sit down and tell me all about it. (*They sit couch* L.)

ELAINE. I hardly know how to commence, Mr. Mills, and I know you will never forgive me when I tell you.

BOB. Let me be the judge of that, Miss Lynne.

ELAINE. Well, to begin, my mother had been an invalid for years before her death and I took care of her, so I never realized the pleasure that could be obtained by mixing with ones of my own age. I have always been a great reader, never cared for going out, for dances or anything of that sort. When the war came on, of course, I had to mix in with the other girls of our town in Red Cross and war work of all kinds.

BOB. I understand.

ELAINE. Along with the knitting of our sweaters and socks there was a continual chatter concerning this dance

and that dance, this boy and that boy, but as I had never attended a dance in my life ——

Bob. Poor kid! Oh, I beg your pardon.

Elaine (*smiling*). Granted. If you will only pardon me as readily. In all this talk of dances and parties and boys I was an outsider. Finally the girls began teasing me about it. They of course meant nothing by it but one thing led on to another until it actually became unbearable. Finally something came into my head that I thought was a wonderful scheme. I—I ——

Bob. Don't hesitate, Miss Lynn, I am honored by being made your confidant.

Elaine. I didn't want to give up my work and I simply couldn't endure their teasing, so I told them I had been secretly married just before the war.

Bob (*laughing*). By Jove! That *was* a good way out of it.

Elaine. They immediately wanted to know my husband's name. I hadn't provided for that and I was at my wit's end to answer them. There was a paper on the table in front of me, on which I had my yarn and needles and just in front of my eyes was a list of promotions of soldiers in the Expeditionary Forces. I took the top name on the list and announced it as my husband.

Bob. Pretty good.

Elaine. But—but—it was yours, Mr. Mills. The name was Robert Mills of Zanesville, Ohio.

Bob (*jumping up*). For the love of —— Well, really I —— It certainly is a surprise to have a wife wished on me so suddenly. (Elaine *turns and bows head on arm of couch.*) Oh, forgive me, Miss Lynne, I don't blame you a bit. I really would have done the same in your position.

Elaine. You are simply saying that to reassure me. I am so ashamed and, Mr. Mills, what am I to do?

Bob (*sitting beside her*). Now let's talk this over. What do you want me to do?

Elaine. When I told the girls this story it naturally got to my aunt's ears and I'll never forget how hurt she was for having, as she thought, married without telling

her anything about it. But she is all kindness and soon smoothed things over. She has been wanting to know when you would get home and to satisfy her I told her you would be over on the Cordonia, thinking I would be able to slip off for a few days and have it understood I had met you and then let things drift as they had, but to my horror she insisted on coming to New York with me to meet the boat. I tried to dissuade her but she insisted and here we are. And to think that the first person we had to run into was you.

BOB. I think it was rather lucky you did. And now what do you want me to do?

ELAINE. If you would only keep up the deception while we are here, and then you can have business in Zanesville or San Francisco or some place and I can go back to Taunton and everything will be all right.

BOB. But how are you going to get rid of me? This thing of having an unattached husband lying around loose sometimes proves dangerous, especially if the right man should happen along.

ELAINE. There won't be a right man, at least not for a while. I am going to remain with Aunt Alice. You will help me out, and you won't tell any one you are not my husband until I give you leave to divulge my secret. You'll promise me, won't you, Mr. Mills?

BOB. Certainly. Just rest easy on that score, Miss Lynne. It will only be for a few days.

Enter AUNT, R.

ELAINE. Oh, I can never thank you enough —— (*Notices* AUNT.) Here's my aunt, now remember. (*To* AUNT.) Aunt Alice, I want you to meet my—my husband, Mr. Mills.

AUNT (*looking him over*). So *this* is Mr. Mills, is it? Well, why have you been in New York so long without notifying your wife?

ELAINE. Oh, Aunt Alice.

BOB. Why-—er—you see I wanted to surprise her.

(ELAINE *breathes sigh of relief.*)

AUNT. Oh, you did, did you? Well, I don't like it. I don't like the way you were married and I don't like the way you have been staying in New York with my nephew when you should have been with your wife. What do you do for a living?

ELAINE. Aunt Alice!

AUNT. It's all right, my dear. This may be a personal question, but now that he has married you, you must live, and to live there must be an income somewhere.

BOB. I am a writer.

AUNT. A writer? You are not by chance a brother of—of Liz, are you?

BOB. No, I'm not.

AUNT. Thank God!

BOB. Liz is a mighty fine girl.

AUNT. That's a matter of opinion. Would you want to be married to her? (BOB *looks surprised.*) I thought so. That reminds me, there was a young lady called here a short time ago to see you and said to tell you that Angela Scott had called and had the pleasure of meeting your wife.

BOB. Great Scott!

AUNT. No, Angela Scott. What I would like to know is why *you,* a married man, have attractive young ladies calling on you, especially when your wife, as you thought, was in Taunton, Mass.

BOB. Angela here and met my—er—you? (*Points to* ELAINE.) And you told her you were my—er—wife?

AUNT. No, I did. What was there wrong about it?

BOB. Now I *am* in a pickle. I must go to her at once. I—I know you will excuse me. (*Bows and backs toward* C. D.) I—I ——

AUNT (*grabbing his arm;* AUNT *should be* L., BOB C., ELAINE R.). Come here! Where are you going?

BOB. I am going to see Angela.

AUNT. Indeed! You are going to do nothing of the kind.

BOB. You will pardon me, my dear Aunt Alice, but that is exactly what I *am* going to do. (*Jerks arm free.*) Good morning!

AUNT. Well, you can at least kiss your wife before you go. You are not very affectionate, seeing her for the first time within a year.

ELAINE. Aunt Alice, I ——

AUNT. Certainly! Why not? You need pay no attention to me. I am a firm believer in proper affection being shown between married couples. Hurry up. (BOB *hesitates, looks at* ELAINE, *then hurriedly kisses her on the forehead.* AUNT *looks at him disdainfully.*) I may be an old maid but if any man who professed to love me kissed me like that —— Here, do it right. (*Puts their heads together and makes them kiss each other.*) Now you can go, and be sure to hurry back, as we are leaving for Taunton soon. (BOB *exits* C. D., AUNT *looking after him.*) Humph! I can't say that I am overly pleased in your selection of a husband. With Tom and his Liz and you and your Bob things have come to a pretty pass. Now I am going to hunt up Liz (odious name) and see what kind of an arrangement I can make with her. I simply must arrange for that divorce.

(*Exits* C. D. ELAINE *goes to window and stands looking out, partially hid by curtain.*)

LIZ (*enters* L., *followed by* BING). Aw, cut out the chinnin', cut out the chinnin'.

BING. But I say, Liz, this is a bum way to treat a guy. Here I been hangin' around and buyin' you ice-cream sodys and takin' you to Coney Island when I had the coin and everything and here you go and throw me down for this swell what paints pictures for a livin'. I calls it dirty, I does. (LIZ R., BING L.)

LIZ. Dirty, me eye. You ain't got no strings on me, have you?

BING. No, but I always thought ——

LIZ. Of *course* you did. That's all you ever did, was think. You ain't the only one as thought you could have me for just liftin' their finger, but you got left, didn't you? Oh, I'm some popular Jane, I am.

BING. How long does this arrangement last?

LIZ. Now you're buttin' in, little cutie. *That* ain't none of your gosh darned business. Why should I discuss my *husband's* business with an outsider?

BING (*angry*). Outsider? Say, I'll punch that guy's nose, that's what I'll do.

LIZ. Oh, no, you won't. I think he's able to take care of himself.

BING. What are you doing in his rooms here?

LIZ. What are you doing in them? I got a right in me *husband's* apartments, ain't I? Not but what I like you, Bing, old kid, but, well, you know. I gotta look out for myself.

BING (*goes to her*). Aw, now Liz. (*Puts his arm around her.*) You ain't gonna throw me down like this, are you? Why, you and me's been too good friends for that.

ELAINE (*comes forward*). Oh, this is dreadful! What do you mean by this disgraceful conduct?

LIZ (*surprised*). Now what's bitin' *you?*

ELAINE. This—this —— Oh, how can you? What would Mr. Denker say if he saw you?

LIZ. Nothin', of course. He's seen us many's a time.

ELAINE. What?

LIZ. Sure thing. He knows Bing and me goes out together. (*To* BING.) Come on, Bingie, old boy. Come on in here, or somebody'll be spillin' the beans.

[*They exeunt,* L.

ELAINE. Oh, this is terrible, terrible. (TOM *enters* C.) Oh, Mr. Denker, I just saw your wife and she was—she was ——

TOM. Yes?

ELAINE. Oh, I can't tell you! (*Rushes out* C.)

TOM (*mystified*). What in blazes is the matter with her?

LIZ (*enters* L.). Bing's been trying to raise some ructions but I got him settled. You know sometimes I think that fellow's got a brain about the size of a bedbug. And, oh, say, I got Ma to turn over the whole floor to you while your relations is here, but believe me it took some spieling.

TOM. Thanks, but please, Liz, do watch your language. Don't say spieling, say talking.

LIZ. Aw, what's eatin' you? You didn't use to be so particular.

TOM. I know, but you weren't my wife then.

LIZ. I ain't now.

TOM. No, but you are supposed to be and that is the same thing. Where on earth did you get that awful dress? (*Walks around her looking at dress.*)

LIZ. Well, if you ain't got a nerve! Why this is the best dress I got. I call it class, I do. This stood me fourteen dollars and ninety-seven cents at Siegel Cooper's. Why there ain't a goil on the Avenue can touch it.

TOM. Don't say goil, say girl.

LIZ. That's what I did say, goil.

TOM. No, no. G-i-r-l, girl.

LIZ. If me line of lingo don't suit you, I chucks the job. I only got one way of talkin' and that's the way I'm spoutin' at you. If that ain't good enough ——

(*Shrugs shoulders and starts toward* C. D.)

TOM. Liz, for heaven's sake! You wouldn't leave me in the lurch, would you?

LIZ. Well, then quit your knockin'. Do you get me?

TOM. All right, but there's just one thing, Liz. I—I think I'll call you Elizabeth. Liz sounds so—so ——

LIZ. Not on your side kicks, will you. Me name's Liz and Liz sticks. That's one of the finest names in the woild. Thank God I ain't no Gladys or Mabel or Hortense.

TOM. At least try and be a little circumspect in your intercourse with Aunt Alice.

LIZ. Wait a minute, wait a minute. You're gettin' above me head. What do you mean by that circum—circumspect thing?

TOM. Be careful in what you say and how you say it. That's what I mean. This means a lot to me and I'm depending on you, Liz, as you always were my friend. You've stood between your mother and me many a time

when I was up against it and I—well—I appreciate it. And now you are helping me out in this ——

(*Turns and walks to window with back to* Liz.)

Liz. Aw, say, Mr. Tom, don't talk like that. Why I'd do anything in the woild for you. Honest I would. I was only kiddin'. As for toinin' you down —— Gee! it ain't in me. I'll watch me woids and the next time I bumps into the old dame (Tom *turns*) I mean the old lady, why I'll be so darned particular she'll think I'm a clerk in the five-and-ten-cent store. Jest let me know what you want done and I'll do it all right.

Tom (*coming front*). That's fine! Now it's about eleven o'clock and I want to serve a lunch here. Do you think if I helped you, you could arrange it?

Liz. What, eat with them?

Tom. I suppose you would have to. But that would be easy. Just watch me and do as you see me do. If I notice you doing anything you shouldn't I'll clear my throat like this—(*clears throat*).

Liz. Like this? (*Imitates him.*)

Tom. That's it.

Liz. I'll try, but don't blame me if the things goes kerflooey. [*Exits.*

Uncle (*enters* C. D. *Has several packages which he lays on table*). Here, I brought some things up for lunch. I always like to buy my own food and then I know what I'm getting. I don't very much like the looks of your housekeeper, and as for your cook—well, the least said the better.

Tom. Jerry is a mighty fine fellow, Uncle.

Uncle. I'm not talking about Jerry the fellow, but about Jerry the cook. You know, my boy, I don't like your establishment here. I think we will discharge that woman, your housekeeper, and ——

Tom. Great Heavens! Don't think of such a thing.

Uncle. And why not? Isn't this your house? Aren't you running it? I'm here to spend some time with you and I'm going to foot the bills while I'm here. (Tom *makes motion of protest.*) No, no use talking back, I

have my mind made up and I intend doing it. Now, call your cook and we'll have him start with the lunch. I'm hungry. (JERRY *enters from kitchen.*) Just in time. Here (*hands him packages*), take these to the kitchen and hurry up with the lunch. (JERRY *looks at him in amazement.*) Well, what are you gaping at? Do as I tell you. I have a nice steak in there and some mushrooms and ——

JERRY. I can't fry a steak with mushrooms.

(*Drops all the packages to the floor.*)

UNCLE. You can't? A nice cook you are, can't fry a steak with mushrooms. Pick those things up. (JERRY *gathers up packages.*) What do you draw your salary for anyway? Hurry up and come on in here. I'll show you how to fry a steak with mushrooms. [*Exits kitchen.*

JERRY (*to* TOM). Oh, you just wait until these people leave. What I won't do to you will be a-plenty.

UNCLE (*entering from kitchen*). Well, don't be all day about it. Get a move on.

(*Grabs* JERRY *by the collar and takes him to kitchen.*)

MRS. R. (*enters* C. D.). What next will you want? Here I let Liz wheedle me into lettin' you have the use of the floor and now the old lady's after me for clean towels and clean sheets. Jest as though me house ain't always clean. I calls it nosing, I does. Oh, if only poor dear Ahenobarbus hadn't 'a' died, I'd never 'a' had to put up with this. (*Sits by table and cries.*)

TOM. For heaven's sake, Mrs. Reese, don't go blabbing ——

MRS. R. (*jumping up*). Crabbing, is it? Just because I stands up for me rights. (*Backs* TOM *across stage shaking finger under his nose.*) I didn't approve of this thing at the start and I ain't any more in favor of it now than I was then, and another thing I want to tell you, young man, you ain't paid all your back rent yet ——

TOM. Why, I gave you ——

MRS. R. That don't apply on the rent. That's special, that is. I've kinda got the upper hand here. You want to be mighty careful what you say to me, do you hear? Crabbing, indeed!

TOM. I didn't say crabbing ——

MRS. R. Yes, you did.

TOM. Oh, well, have it your own way.

JERRY (*enters from kitchen with frying pan*). I won't do it, I tell you I won't. (*Shakes pan at door.*)

UNCLE (*enters from kitchen*). Come back here! Come on. (*Takes* JERRY *by the shoulder.*) Cook? You call yourself a cook? You don't know anything about it. What did you ever cook?

JERRY. Well, I once made a pancake for a lark.

UNCLE. Made a pancake for a lark! Well, you're going to fry a beefsteak for a *man* now. Get in with you.

(*Shoves* JERRY *into kitchen and follows him.*)

MRS. R. (*has been watching* JERRY *and* UNCLE *during this scene. As they exit sees picture near door*). Oh, my poor dear Ahenobarbus. (*Goes to picture, lays hand against it and cries.*) Oh, my poor dear Henry, if only you knowed the carryings on in this house and what your poor dear Mehetibelly has to go through with, you never would 'a' died.

AUNT (*enters* C. D.). What is the matter, Tom? What is she crying about?

TOM. She is crying over her dear departed husband, Ahenobarbus.

AUNT. Poor woman! (*Takes* MRS. R. *in her arms,* MRS. R. *crying loudly.*) Here, lean on me. (*To* TOM.) When did her husband die?

TOM. About fifteen years ago.

AUNT. Fifteen years ago! (*Walks away from* MRS. R., *who nearly falls, as she has been leaning against* AUNT.) It's time she was looking for a second husband instead of crying over her first.

TOM. Her second? She's buried her third.

MRS. R. Oh, Ahenobarbus, things would be different

if you was alive. (*Takes picture from wall.*) Come with me, darling. Mother will take care of you.

[*Exit,* C. D.

Enter LIZ *and clears table.*

AUNT. Tom, go down to the drug store on the corner and buy me a—a—well anything.

TOM (*as she shoves him toward door*). What will I buy?

AUNT. Oh, buy anything; a baby rattle will do.

TOM (*amazed*). A baby rattle? What on earth do you want with a baby rattle?

AUNT. Oh, don't be so dense. I want to speak to your wife *alone.*

TOM. But, Aunt Alice, I ——

AUNT. Do as I tell you! (TOM *turns toward* LIZ *and puts finger on lips, exits* C. D. *To* LIZ.) Haven't you any house dresses?

LIZ. House dresses? What's them?

AUNT. Dresses to wear in the house, of course. I should think a simple house dress would be much easier to work in than the one you have on.

LIZ. No, me house dresses is all at the cleaners. (*Affectedly.*) This is the simplest dress I have. Tommy, dear, is mighty loose with his change and I never wears anything in the house but clothes like these. (*Sits at table and poses, fixing dress so that it lies in certain positions, etc.*) Why, you know I was stuck on this dress the foist time I seen it. I was walkin' along Columbus Avenue and as soon as I lamps it I says to Bing, I mean Tommy, I says, Tommy, there's some dress, me fer it. And I beats it into the store and I says to the cloik, how much for the pink glad rags in the window, I says, and he says ——

AUNT. Really, my dear, I am not interested in your dress and how you got it.

LIZ. Well, you started it, not me. I wasn't saying anything about the bunch of junk you has on. If you was to *ast* my opinion, though, I'd say it was p-u-nn-k, Punk.

AUNT. Where were you educated, my dear?

LIZ. What?

AUNT. Where did you go to school?

LIZ. Never went. Had to go to woik when I was a kid. The old man never could hold a job cause he was always soused ——

AUNT. Soused?

LIZ. Tanked, spiflicated, boozed, lit up; you know. Plain every-day drunk, so I had to get out and rustle the grub.

AUNT. Why, I thought your father was a writer.

LIZ. A writer? Lord, mam, all he could write was, "Give the kid a pint" when he sent me out to rush the growler.

AUNT. Rush the growler?

LIZ (*disgusted*). Aw, when he sent me out for a bucket of suds. Gee! Where did you learn to talk? Why, you can't understand United States.

AUNT. Oh, this is terrible! How could Tom have gotten into such a mess?

LIZ (*rising*). That's jest what I said to him, mam, when he ast me —— (*Catches herself.*)

AUNT. Asked you what?

LIZ. To marry him, I reckon. [*Exits* L., *laughing.*

BOB (*enters* C. D., *followed by* ANGELA). I would like to speak to—to—Elaine.

AUNT. Well, no one will prevent you. I presume you are privileged to speak to your wife. I'll send her to you. I don't see what you mean by bringing *that* young lady here though. [*Exit,* L.

ANGELA. Bob, why did you insist that I come back to meet her? If she is your wife, your duty is to her. What difference does it make what I think of her or you?

BOB. But I tell you she isn't —— (*Catches himself.*)

ANGELA. Isn't what? You have made that remark three or four times. I would like to know just what you do mean. You asked me to marry you and I promised I would. You asked me to wait for you and I have, almost three years, and now this comes up.

(*Turns and walks to back of stage.*)

BOB (*following her*). Angela! Just trust me. She will explain it all in a few moments. (*Walks to door* L.) Why in thunder don't she come? Oh, here she is. (*Pulls* ELAINE *over to* ANGELA, *as she enters* L.) Now tell her all about it; just like you told it to me.

ELAINE. Tell her about what?

BOB. Why about—about—(ELAINE *puts finger on lips*) you know; what you told me just a short time ago.

ELAINE. Oh, I know! I just told my husband (BOB *stiffens*) that I was going to remain with Aunt Alice while he——

ANGELA (*contemptuously*). Just told your husband! (*To* BOB.) And you asked me to trust you. (*Pulls ring from her finger and throws it at* BOB'S *feet.*) There's your ring. And I believed in you!

BOB. Angela!

ANGELA. Don't speak to me! (*Starts* C. D., BOB *following.*) Don't even look at me. (*Turns suddenly,* BOB *almost falling to prevent running into her.*) I have nothing for you but contempt. You—you —— (JERRY *enters from kitchen.*) Why, Jerry! When did you get back?

JERRY. Yesterday. (*They shake hands.*) You are certainly looking great, Angela.

ANGELA. And to think that you never even wrote to me the whole time you were gone.

BOB. Angela!

ANGELA (*paying no attention to* BOB). You shouldn't forget your old friends like that, Jerry.

JERRY (*puzzled*). Well, I thought that you and Bob were—er—er ——

ANGELA. What? Bob? I interested in Bob? Oh, dear no! We have a thorough understanding with each other. Bob? (*Laughs.*)

BOB. Angela! (JERRY *and* ANGELA *talk together quietly.*) Angela, I say, I —— (*They pay no attention to him.*) Oh, dammit! [*Rushes out* C. D.

ELAINE. Pardon me, Miss Scott, but really you don't understand. You see —— (ANGELA *turns and stares*

at ELAINE *from head to foot.*) Very well. You will be sorry you declined to listen to me. (*Bows and exits* L.)

JERRY (*walks to* C. D. *and looks out and then to* L.). What's going on in here? I believe this whole house is going dippy. Tom goes and gets himself mixed up into a nice scrape and rings me in on it and now you and Bob seem to have some kind of a tiff. (*Notices* ANGELA *looking at his clothes.*) Oh, you are admiring my clothes, I see. Latest thing from Paris, I assure you. (*Walks exaggeratedly across stage.*) Brought them with me from the other side.

ANGELA. Same old Jerry.

JERRY. Say, do you know how to make a cake?

ANGELA. No, I can't say that I do.

JERRY. I wish I could find somebody that does.

ANGELA. What does a doctor have to know about making a cake?

JERRY. They say we often make a mess of things, and I am blamed sure if I bake a cake it will be a mess, but are you sure you can't help me out?

ANGELA. No, I'm afraid I can't. You see I never was much of a housekeeper.

JERRY. That's just the trouble with me. Wait a minute. (*Exits into kitchen, returning immediately with large spoon, large pan, several packages and book, all of which he puts on table* C.) Now, it says in this book to take a lump of butter the size of a nut. Now what kind of a nut? A walnut, a hickory nut, a cocoanut ——

ANGELA. I think I would make it a walnut, Jerry.

JERRY. All right, in she goes. (*Puts butter in pan.*) Then it says to mix the butter and the flour and the nutmeg and all the rest of the dope together and fold in the whites of three eggs, shaking the pan gently until it settles. (*Has been reading this from book.*) Now, how the h —— I beg your pardon, I mean how can you *fold* anything in the white of an egg?

ANGELA. Not being a cook, Jerry, I'm afraid I can't help you. (*Starts* C.)

JERRY. Don't be in a hurry. Stick around. (ANGELA *returns and sits* L. *of table.*) You see there is an old

gazaboo in the next room there that insists he must have a cake for his dinner and insists that I make it. Now, I have everything here; maybe the two of us can get the thing done if we stay with it. (*Gets book.*) First, it says a quart of flour. I got that. (*Pours flour from bag into pan.*) Now salt to taste. I suppose three tablespoonfuls ought to be enough, don't you?

ANGELA. I should *think* it would be.

(*He puts in three tablespoonfuls salt.*)

JERRY. All right, what's next? (*Reads.*) Three eggs, separating the yolks from the whites. But suppose they don't want to be separated. (*Breaks eggs in dish.*) Well, there they are. But how do you separate them?

ANGELA. Why ask me? I told you I was not a cook.

JERRY. I guess we'll have to send them to the divorce court. It's good for separating things. (*Scratches head.*) Well, it has me stumped. Maybe you do it this way. (*Attempts to pour eggs from dish into pan and spills them on the floor.*) Now what do you think of that and those are all the eggs I have, too. (*Looks at them a moment.*) Well, he insists on having his cake and the cake must have its eggs, so we will give him all we have. (*Gathers eggs from floor with spoon and puts them in pan.*) Now have we got everything? (*Counts.*) Butter, flour, salt, eggs and baking powder. Gee! I forgot the baking powder. How much does it say? (*Looks at book.*) Add sufficient quantity of baking powder. Now, how in the devil should I know what a sufficient quantity of baking powder is. (*Studies.*) I have a quart of flour and I suppose a box of baking powder would be plenty, don't you?

ANGELA. Oh, I think that would be loads.

JERRY (*puts in baking powder*). Now then (*reads from book*), shake gently until thoroughly settled.

(*Shakes the pan violently on the table.*)

ANGELA. You didn't stir it up.

JERRY. Oh, yes, I forgot. (*Takes spoon and mixes the cake.*) What's the matter with you and Bob?

ANGELA. Don't mention his name to me again.

JERRY. All right. Suppose you could ever get interested in anybody else?

ANGELA. I might.

JERRY. I know a mighty fine fellow, a doctor ——

ANGELA. A doctor?

JERRY. Yes, name of Jerry Smith, just returned from France, and he always was interested in you ——

(UNCLE *enters from kitchen;* JERRY *sees him and shakes pan violently on table.*)

UNCLE. So that's what you are doing? Have you got that cake mixed yet? (*Looks into pan.*) Did you put in the milk?

JERRY. Do you have to put milk in a cake?

UNCLE. Do you have to put milk in a cake? Why of course you do. Cook! A fine cook you are. You don't know anything. What kind of a house does Tom run? (*Pointing to* ANGELA.) Who is this?

JERRY. A friend of Tom's.

(*Puts pan containing cake mixture on chair* R. *of table.*)

UNCLE. A friend of *Tom's,* eh? Sitting here talking to the cook. Don't you know any better than to call your employer by his first name? Mr. Denker, sir, would suit you a whole lot better. A friend of Tom's. I see there is nothing else to be done around this place but for me to take hold and run it. Now you get into the kitchen, if you can call it that, and get lunch ready. (*To* ANGELA.) And as for you ——

ANGELA. As for me, I can take care of myself. I think you are a meddlesome, nosey old man. Come, Jerry, I'll help you out. [*They exit kitchen.*

UNCLE. A meddlesome, nosey *old* man. Well, I like that. (*Starts* R.)

TOM (*enters* C. D.). Well, here's the baby rattle. (*Looks around.*) Where is she?

UNCLE. Who?

TOM. Aunt Alice.

UNCLE. What have you got there? (*Takes rattle from* TOM'S *hand.*) A baby rattle. Playing innocent, aren't you? (*Digs him in the ribs.*) What is it, a boy or a girl?

TOM. Is what a boy or a girl?

UNCLE. The baby, of course.

Enter BOB, C. D.

TOM. What baby?

UNCLE. Why your baby, you idiot.

TOM. I have no baby.

UNCLE (*poking him in the ribs*). Tee hee! Trying to play a joke on your old uncle, aren't you?

TOM. No, really, Uncle, I ——

UNCLE. Come, come, come. I don't blame you wanting to keep it all to yourself. I know it's a boy. Have you named it yet?

TOM. No, Uncle, you see ——

UNCLE. All right, we'll call it William. William Denker, after me. We'll have it christened to-day and to show that I appreciate the honor I'll give the proud father a check of one thousand dollars right after the christening.

TOM. Now, look here, Uncle, I want to tell you ——

BOB (*behind* TOM, *pulls his coat*). For heaven's sake, keep quiet. Get the check somehow. You need it.

TOM. Keep still. Do you suppose I'm going to get pulled into a thing like this? (*Goes toward* UNCLE, *and stands on rug.*) Now, Uncle, I'm going to tell you exactly what's in my mind. You see ——

MRS. R. (*enters* C. D.; *is very much excited*). I ain't a-goin' to stand for it a minute longer, I ain't. I'm a woman and I got feelin's, ain't I? This is my house, ain't it? I give her the clean sheets and the towels and now she comes and tells me how she wants me to dress. White cap and a white apron, she says. Well, I ain't a-goin' to do it. Oh, Ahenobarbus, if you'd a-only lived. Things wouldn't have come to this pass. Oh! Oh! Oh! (*Sits* R. *of table in pan containing cake mixture.*) Oh,

Henny dear, just look down and take pity on your poor Mehetibely. (*All try to comfort her.*)

JERRY (*enters from kitchen, looking around*). Has anybody seen my cake? Cake, cake, who's got the cake?

(*Snaps his fingers, as though he were calling it.*)

UNCLE. I haven't seen anything of it around here. Didn't you take it with you?

JERRY. No, I left it here some place. I just discovered I didn't put any sugar in it and when I went to look for it I couldn't find it. It's in a big pan.

TOM (*noticing* MRS. R. *sitting in pan*). I believe you are sitting on it, Mrs. Reese.

MRS. R. Hey?

TOM. You are sitting on the cake, cake, sitting on the cake.

MRS. R. (*gets up; sees what she has been sitting on; steps on rug, very angry*). Now, just look at my nice clean dress. I won't stand it any more, I won't. I'm going to tell exactly what's in my mind, I am. That man —— (*Pointing to* TOM.)

TOM. Now, Mrs. Reese, *dear* Mrs. Reese ——

BOB (*trying to pull her off rug*). If we can only get her off that confounded rug.

MRS. R. (*to* BOB). Quit your pullin' of me. What's the matter with you?

BOB. Here's a much nicer place to stand right over here. (*Points.*)

MRS. R. No, where I am I stays. As I was a-sayin', that man ——

TOM. Just a moment, Mrs. Reese. (*To* JERRY.) Bring Liz; she can handle her. Hurry, for God's sake.

UNCLE. What the devil's going on in here?

MRS. R. As I said, that man ——

ANGELA (*enters from kitchen*). Fire, fire! Come quick. Fire!

EVERYBODY. Where, where? What's on fire, etc.

(*All rush off into kitchen but* TOM, *who drops on chair at* R. *of table.*)

ELAINE (*enters* L.). What's the matter?

TOM. Oh, I believe the house is on fire, or something like that.

ELAINE. House is on fire? Oh, let's get out. Hurry, hurry. (*Tries to pull* TOM *off.*)

TOM. Oh, it don't make any difference to me. Things couldn't be much worse than they are. What's a little fire more or less?

ELAINE (*looks around and then sits at table across from* TOM). Is there something wrong, Mr. Denker?

TOM. Yes, everything's wrong. First, I—I—told a lie and then ——

ELAINE. Yes?

TOM. And then I told another one. One lie always brings another, you know.

ELAINE. Yes, I know, but perhaps it can be remedied. Go to the party injured and explain matters.

TOM. Go and explain? No, I couldn't do that. You see she is—she is—well, I just can't explain.

ELAINE (*reaching hand across table to* TOM). I think I understand. It concerns some one you love very much; some one you wouldn't hurt for the world.

TOM. Yes, yes, that's it. But how did you know?

ELAINE. Because I am in the same predicament as you.

TOM. You!

ELAINE. Yes, I. Oh, Mr. Denker, I have done something for which I am thoroughly ashamed, something that I am afraid I can never make right. I fear I have separated two loving hearts.

TOM. I hardly think you have done that bad. (*Pause.*) Do you know I am greatly interested in you. I wonder if we could have been friends had things been different?

ELAINE (*turning away from him*). I suppose so.

TOM. I have never met a girl that has made the impression on me that you have ——

ELAINE (*surprised*). How about your wife?

TOM. My wife? Oh, she don't count.

(ELAINE *looks surprised.*)

UNCLE (*enters from kitchen with burnt steak in pan. Is followed by* BOB *and* MRS. R.). Look at it! Look at it! Burnt to a crisp and I paid forty-seven cents a pound for it. That man ought to be out digging ditches instead of trying to cook. Where is he?

TOM. Where is who, Uncle?

UNCLE. That cook. Jerry, I think you call him.

TOM. I sent him on a little errand.

UNCLE (*goes to window and throws steak out*). There! Maybe the dogs will enjoy it. Now, look here, Tom, I'm going to take charge around here. Your place is run entirely too loose to suit me. What this place needs is a head, something to look to when things go wrong, which they are always doing, it seems to me. In the first place you have the poorest rooms in the house. You ought to move across the hall. The rooms on that side have plenty of sun; these are too dark and dingy. Then I think I'll let Jerry go and get a *real* cook. We can give the housekeeper a month's pay and let her go too.

MRS. R. (*who has been listening intently*). What's that? What did you say?

UNCLE. I said we would give you a month's pay and let you go. Doesn't it suit you?

MRS. R. (*backing him around stage shaking finger in his face*). Give me a month's pay and let me go, will you? You'd better pay your nephew's room rent before you talk about lettin' me go, you had. Now, I'm not going to stand for any more of this. (JERRY *and* LIZ *enter* C. D.) This is *my* house and I want every one here to understand it, and what's more, what I says *goes*.

(*Looks around triumphantly.*)

LIZ. My God! Ma's got her dander up.

UNCLE (*amazed*). What's this? What's she talking about, Tom? You don't owe her rent, do you?

TOM (*trying to laugh*). Why, no, of course not. Ha! Ha! A good joke, you see, you —— Liz, for God's sake, keep her quiet. I'll do anything for you if you'll only keep her from spilling everything.

LIZ. Watch me. (*To* MRS. R.) I was just a-passin'

Little Tiddilum's room and he was a-yelpin' something fierce. The poor little dear must have the colic.

MRS. R. What! And nobody with him? Poor little darling! Let me go to him. Poor little dear.

(*Rushes out* C. D.)

LIZ. I knowed that would fetch her.

UUCLE. What on earth is she talking about now? Tiddilums! A nice name for a child.

TOM. Uncle, I tried to tell you ——

MRS. R. (*heard outside*). Hurry, Bing, hurry. Maybe Mr. Denker has some. Do hurry!

BING (*outside*). Aw, what'd he be doin' with paregoric, I'd like to know.

MRS. R. (*outside*). Well, then, maybe he has some whiskey. Please hurry, Bing.

BING (*enters* C. D.). Say! Any youse guys got some paregoric or whiskey?

UNCLE. So that's the way you treat my nephew William, is it? Turn him over to the housekeeper to be cared for and be doped with whiskey and paregoric? Aren't you ashamed of yourself! The poor little darling sick and no one to look after him. *I'll* go to him. *I'll* see that he's taken care of. Where is he? Where is he?

[*Exit,* C. D.

BING (*much mystified*). What ails the old nut? I was jest passin' the door when the old lady grabs me and said to come in here and see if any of youse guys had some paregoric or some whiskey, as dis was closter than the drug store, and then the old guy shoots off. What's eatin' of him?

LIZ. What did he mean by his nephew William?

TOM. Oh, he has an idea in his head that I have a baby.

LIZ. Holy Hat! Foist they hangs a husband on me and now they drapes me with a baby. What's comin' next?

UNCLE (*enters* C. D. *with baby basket. Is singing*). Hush-a-by baby, in the tree top. (*Speaks.*) The little darling! See, I know how to quiet a baby. He quieted

down just as soon as I took the basket from that woman. Poor little William! I *know* he looks like me, I'm sure of it. (*Parts coverings and takes out small dog.*) Good Lord! It's a dog. (*All laugh.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

The scene is the same as in preceding act except that table is set for six persons in middle of stage. Milk should be on the table in bottle and loaf of bread should be lying on cloth uncut. As curtain goes up Tom *and* Liz *are arranging table.*

Tom. You don't put the milk on the table in the bottle; put it in a pitcher. And the bread; put it on a plate. Don't lay the loaf on like that.

Liz (*pouring milk in pitcher*). That's the way Ma always does.

Tom. Possibly, but I don't like it.

Liz (*cutting bread*). It tastes just as good.

Tom. But it don't *look* as good and you know I want to make an impression with this lunch.

Liz. From the looks of the stuff what Jerry has cooked up you'll make an impression all right. You ought to see the ham. He has it cut in chunks like this. (*Shows him.*) And he's made noodle soup. Some soup, I'll tell the world. I think he made it out of his rubber overshoes, for I picked one of the noodles up and stretched it like this (*illustrates*), and it flew right back in me eye. And the coffee, it's so strong you'll have to tie the door-key to the lump of sugar to make it sink. You'll make an impression all right, you can just bet your sweet young life.

Tom. Oh, why did things have to turn out like this just when I wanted them to turn out right? (*Looking over table.*) Where's the flowers?

Liz. What do you want with them? You can't eat them.

Tom. I know you can't, but they look nice. Can't we get some?

Liz. I'll send Bing after them. He's got awful good

taste in flowers. He bought me a fine bunch on me birthday two years ago. Hollyhocks all mixed up with sunflowers. Gee! They was sure great. (*Calls* L.) Bing! Ho, Bing!

BING (*outside* L.). What do you want?

LIZ. Come on in here a minute. Mr. Denker wants you to dig up some glad rags for the banquet.

BING (*at door* L.). What's that?

TOM (*handing him coin*). I need some flowers for the lunch. Would you mind going after some for me? I think you can get them over on Pike street.

BING. Oh, all right. That's about all the good I am around this joint to-day, is to run after things. First it was lug in the furniture. Then it was git the paregoric for the dog and now it's run after some posies.

LIZ (*going to* BING *and laying head on his shoulder*). Aw, Bing, don't be sore. (*Strokes his arm.*) When me husband buys me me automobile I'll give you a good job as chauffeur. Now beat it. (*Gives him a sudden shove which almost upsets him. He exits* C. D. *grumbling.*) You gotta treat him rough. That's the only way you can get him to do anything. He's gettin' to be a regular old grouch. He needs some of them noodles to put a little pep into him.

TOM (*at* R.). What have you ready, Jerry?

JERRY (*enters from kitchen with white cloth tied around his waist for apron. Imitates French chef*). Fairst we have zee soup. Ah! Mon Cher! It is nectair for ze Gods. Zen we have zee noodle. Is eet good? Wee, wee. Bet your life. And zee bis*keet.* Such biskeets you nevair did eat. I know for I baked 'em myself. Zen we have ze boiled ham, ze coffee, pickles, jelly and ze fruit. In plain English we have rotten soup, bum biscuits, tough noodles, strong coffee, Heinz's pickles, store jelly and some sour apples.

TOM. I suppose it will have to do but I did want things to go off with a bang.

JERRY. Oh, they will all right. Especially the biscuits. If you ever *bang* anybody with one of them they'll go right off to sleep and never wake up.

TOM. Now the next thing is, who will serve the meal?

(ANGELA *at kitchen door.*)

JERRY. What's the matter with yours truly?

TOM. That regalia of yours don't look much like a butler's.

ANGELA (*coming forward*). I don't go on duty until three o'clock to-day, Mr. Denker; perhaps I can help.

TOM. Miss Scott! Well, I—I would appreciate it very much, but why should you interest yourself in my affairs?

JERRY. Oh, I told her all about them. She helped me make the noodles and bake the biscuits.

TOM. It surely is kind of you, Miss Scott. Perhaps some day I can return the favor. Now, Jerry, for heaven's sake stay in the kitchenette. Don't show yourself.

JERRY. Kitchenette? You mean kitchen-*nit.* [*Exit,* R.

UNCLE (*enters* C. D.). Are you ever going to serve that lunch, Tom?

TOM. Everything's ready. Where are the rest?

UNCLE. They're coming, if they ever get here. Where shall I sit?

TOM. Right there, Uncle. (*Seats him back of table.* AUNT, ELAINE *and* BOB *enter* L.) Just in time. Aunt, you sit here. (*Seats her beside* UNCLE.) Elaine here. (*Beside* AUNT.) Bob right here. (*Beside* UNCLE. *Looks at* LIZ *and swallows.*) Elizabeth ——

LIZ (*very emphatic*). Liz! (*All look up startled.*)

TOM. Right here. (*Seats her left front; he right front.*) Miss Scott, will you kindly serve the lunch?

AUNT. Oh, indeed! It was the maid he was so sociable with, was it? Tom, will you be kind enough to tell me why your maid and Mr. Mills are on such good terms?

(ANGELA *exits kitchen; returns serving coffee, etc.*)

TOM. Well, why shouldn't they be if they want to?

AUNT. Indeed! If you get such ideas as that in New York I think it is high time you left.

TOM. What do you mean, Aunt?

AUNT. Nothing at all, only it seems rather peculiar to me that a *married* man should interest himself in another woman in the manner Mr. Mills has with Miss Scott.

ELAINE. Aunt Alice, please say no more.

TOM. What on earth are you talking about? Old Bob isn't married.

AUNT. Oh, isn't he? Allow me to acquaint you of the fact that his wife is right here at this table.

ELAINE (*rising*). I know you will pardon me ——

AUNT. Sit still, Elaine. Because your husband ——

TOM. Husband! Is Bob the man you came to New York to meet?

AUNT. He certainly is.

TOM. Bob married to you? Well, I'll be —— Could you beat that? (*Looks all around, then turns quickly to* ANGELA.) Please serve the soup.

(ANGELA *starts toward kitchen and* BOB *rises to follow her.*)

UNCLE (*as he slams* BOB *down on his chair*). Sit still and talk to your wife. Sometimes it does a man good.

BING (*enters* C. D. *with flowers*). Here's the posies. (*Pitches them on the table.*) Where's me seat?

(*Looks for his seat at table.*)

LIZ (*rising*). Say, ain't you got no etikette? Don't you know that ain't no way to act in company? Now beat it. (*Starts to arrange flowers.*)

BING. Oh, that's all I gets, is it? It's Bing do this and Bing do that but when it comes to gettin' anything out of it, Bing ain't in it. I ain't got no use for this combination nohow, and I'm just going to tell the whole works. You see this guy —— (*Points to* TOM.)

LIZ (*as she takes piece of bread and stuffs it in* BING'S *mouth*). Fill your face and then you won't run so much at the mouth. Now beat it, while the beatin's good.

(BING *coughs and sputters as* LIZ *takes him by the ear and leads him out* L.; *then returning to her seat at the table.*)

UNCLE. Elizabeth, I think ——

(ANGELA *serves the soup.*)

LIZ. Liz!

UNCLE. Elizabeth!

LIZ (*hammering table*). I said Liz! (*Standing.*)

UNCLE. And I said Elizabeth, and that goes. Sit down! (LIZ *sits.*) As I started to say, my dear *Elizabeth,* your choice of friends can hardly be commended. I think Mr. Bing is decidedly tough.

LIZ. Oh, he's a tough guy all right, but I can handle him.

AUNT. I think we will start home this evening, Tom. Conditions here are hardly such that we should prolong our stay. Now that Elaine has met her husband I can really see no reason for us remaining over.

(LIZ *is eating her soup, making considerable noise in doing so.* TOM *clears his throat loudly several times, finally has violent fit of coughing.* LIZ *pays no attention to him but finishes soup and holds bowl up pouring last drops into spoon. She then wipes her mouth first on one sleeve then on the other, all rise, watching her. She looks up.*)

LIZ. What the —— (*They all sit down.*)

TOM (*to* LIZ). Didn't you hear me give you the signal? (*Others talking.*)

LIZ. What signal?

TOM. I cleared my throat two or three times. You shouldn't make any noise in eating. Watch me. The way you ate that soup one would think you were taking a bath. Now watch me for the rest of the meal.

(LIZ *does exactly as* TOM *does for the rest of the meal. manner of holding cup, napkin, etc.* ANGELA *clears soup plates.*)

UNCLE. Now, as we were talking before that dog episode ——

LIZ. My God! I thought I'd bust when you pulled that dog out of the basket ——

(TOM *clears throat.* LIZ *stops very suddenly and resumes her eating, watching him.*)

UNCLE. As I was saying, I think, Tom, it would be a good idea for you to rearrange your household. I don't think your wife is—er—quite capable of performing ——

LIZ. Capable of performin'? Say! You'd orter see me do the rag baby dip.

(*Gets up and starts eccentric dance.* TOM *coughs. She stops, looks at him and resumes her seat.*)

UNCLE. As I was saying when your wife interrupted me, I don't think she is quite capable of performing the arduous duties connected with keeping up an establishment the size of this one, so I think between us we ought to arrange to change things around a little. In fact, I think the best way out of it would be for you to take another house, one more suited to a professional man. I don't like this one at all, so we'll go out this afternoon and hunt up something better.

TOM. Really, Uncle, I am well satisfied here.

UNCLE. Nonsense! My nephew satisfied with a place like this? The very idea. To tell you the truth I can't quite reconcile this place with your letters. You always said you were so prosperous, but this place looks—well, I don't like it, that's all. While we are out I think we will look up another housekeeper. I don't like that old Ahenobarbus woman.

LIZ (*jumping up*). Here! Don't you dare call my ——

(TOM *takes violent fit of coughing;* UNCLE *pounds him on back.*)

UNCLE. What on earth's the matter with you? This is about the third or fourth time to-day you have about coughed your head off. I wonder if it's those confounded biscuits. They taste as though they were made out of gunpowder and sawdust.

MRS. R. (*heard outside*). Help! Help! Help! (*Enters* C. D.) Come quick! Oh, hurry, or he will be killed. Hurry! [*Exit,* C. D., *all following her.*

JERRY (*enters from kitchen, followed by* ANGELA). What the deuce is the matter with the old lady now? (*They look out* C. D.) She can raise more particular kinds of h—— (*turns and looks at* ANGELA) fits in a short space of time than any woman I know.

ANGELA. It seems the dinner is about ended, so I must be off. I must change my dress before I go to the library.

JERRY. Fine! I'll walk over with you.

ANGELA (*looking at his clothes*). Well, I would like to have you, but, er ——

JERRY. But er what?

ANGELA. I thought possibly you might want to put on another suit.

JERRY. Oh, dammit! Beg your pardon. No, I guess I won't go. If I met a policeman he would think it was Charlie Chaplin taking a walk in Fatty Arbuckle's togs. I say, Angela, you know that doctor I told you about a little bit ago; the one that thought a lot of you.

ANGELA (*walking on rug*). Yes.

JERRY. He still thinks a lot of you and ——

ANGELA. Jerry, Jerry. You don't care for me and you know it. It's just a case of the man and the ——

JERRY. Pretty girl.

ANGELA. I would hardly go so far as to say that. Say the girl being handy. You *think* you are in love with me. You have been over in France so long that the sight of an American girl has gone to your head.

JERRY. No, I am telling the truth. I honestly am.

ANGELA. No, you just think you are. Besides you have told me time and time again you would never marry until you became a famous surgeon with a big practice, and I want you to wait until then. (*Pause.*) I might as well tell the truth, too. I love Bob.

JERRY. And you have had a scrap with him, I suppose. What do you want me to do? Punch his head?

(*Starts toward* C. D.)

ANGELA (*stopping him*). No, no! That wouldn't do any good anyhow, as he is married.

JERRY. What! Old Bob married? The sly old dog. But look here; what was he making love to you for if he already has a wife?

ANGELA. I don't know why he did it but I'll never forgive him, never!

(*Rushes off* C. D., *running into* BOB *at door.*)

BOB. Angela, just a moment, please.

(ANGELA *glares at him disdainfully and exits.*)

JERRY. Look here, young man. Will you tell me what you mean by making love to a girl like that when you are already married?

BOB. What the devil is that any of your business, I should like to know?

JERRY. I'm going to make it some of my business. I think a lot of that girl ——

BOB. You think a lot of her, do you? Who gave *you* any right to think a lot of her? You keep away from her. Do you hear me? Keep away!

JERRY. Of all the nerve! You, a married man, telling me to keep away from her. What's it any of your business whether I keep away from her or not? What would your wife think if she heard you?

BOB. My wife, my —— Oh, I'll go crazy in a minute. She's got to clear this thing up, that's all there is to it. She's got to. [*Exits* L.

JERRY. I think the whole darn bunch is bughouse. And I left the army for a little peace and quiet.

[*Exits kitchen.*

UNCLE (*enters* C. D. *followed by* AUNT *and* ELAINE). For God's sake! The dog had its tail caught in the wringer. What the devil did she have the dog in the wash-tub for? I'm going to get rid of that woman, that's all there is to it. I'm going right in now and discharge her. (*Starts* C. D.) No, I believe I'll let Tom do it. Still, I might as well let her know I'm running things from now on.

MRS. R. (*enters* C. D. *with dog in her arms*). Poor Little Tiddilums! Did ums tail hurt? (*Shows dog's tail wrapped up in big bandage.*) Naughty wringer. Hurt poor doggy's tail.

UNCLE. Here, here, here. Cut out that slush. Cut out that slush.

MRS. R. Hey?

UNCLE (*yelling*). I said, cut out that slush.

MRS. R. No, I don't like mush.

UNCLE. Slush, slush. S-l-u-s-h slush.

MRS. R. Well, what about it? I never et it. Is it a new breakfast food?

UNCLE. Oh, wouldn't this get your goat? Who said anything about eating it? I said —— Oh, confound it. Where did Tom ever pick her up, I should like to know.

ELAINE. If you speak right into the tube she can hear you.

UNCLE. While she's here I'll discharge her, that's what I'll do. (*Speaking in tube.*) I've decided to make a change around here. How much does my nephew owe you?

MRS. R. Thirty-two dollars, and that means a whole lot to a poor lone widdy woman with a dog ——

UNCLE. That's enough. Here (*takes out wallet*), I'll pay you off and then you can go.

MRS. R. (*reaching for money and then drawing her hand back*). Go? Go? What do you mean?

UNCLE. What do I mean? Can't you understand plain English? Beat it. Get out. Vamoose. Take your suitcase and toddle along.

MRS. R. (*drops dog*). What! What's that you are saying? Me beat it. Out of my own house? That's the second time you've told me that. (*Shakes finger in his face and backs him into corner* R.) I would like to have you distinctly understand that I won't be put out of here. I'm running things here and I'm able to run them. Let me tell you it's your nephew that'll go and you'll go with him. I don't intend to have you or any one else come in here and tell me what *I'll* do. (*Throws apron over head and sits in chair* R. *of table.*) Oh, if only poor

dear Ahenobarbus was here, things wouldn't be like this. Oh, Ahenobarbus, look down on this mean old man insulting of your dear Mehetibelly. (*Cries.*)

AUNT (*who has been enjoying the scene*). Conciliate her. Don't be so harsh with the poor thing. She's grieving for her husband. I think you were cruel to her.

UNCLE. Well, maybe I was. (*Goes to* MRS. R. *and puts his hand on her shoulder.*) Now, Mrs. Reese ——

MRS. R. (*jumping up and throwing his hand from shoulder*). Don't you dast to touch me, you viper! I knowed as soon as I seen you comin' in you was goin' to bring trouble and now I'm sure of it. Oh, what us poor defenseless women has to endure from you beasts of men. (*Sits and cries.*) Oh, Ahenobarbus, Ahenobarbus, things wouldn't 'a' been like this if you was here.

(AUNT *makes motions for* UNCLE *to pacify her. He touches her very gingerly on the shoulder.*)

UNCLE. There, there, Mrs. Reese, I didn't mean anything by what I said.

MRS. R. Yes, you did. You've insulted me, that's what you have.

UNCLE. Perhaps I was a little hasty, but we'll let bygones be bygones. Here's a ten to sort of square things with us. (*She reaches up and grabs the ten but does not stop crying.*) Well, I'll be ——

AUNT. Keep it up. She'll forgive you.

UNCLE. Keep up what? Passing her ten dollar bills?

AUNT. Silly.

UNCLE. You see, Mrs. Reese, I didn't really mean anything. I was just a little bit excited perhaps and then I always rather liked you too.

MRS. R. (*stops crying, takes apron from her face and looks at him*). Are you a-tryin' to make up to me?

UNCLE. Good Lord, no! *Me* make up to *you?* Well, I should hope not.

MRS. R. Oh, is that so! Well, let me tell you I'm just as good as you are. Maybe I ain't got money but I'm a lady, I am, and I want you to understand it.

UNCLE. Oh, we understand *that* all right.

MRS. R. Indeed! Well, I don't like the way you say it. (*Starts toward him.*)

UNCLE (*backing from her*). Keep off! Keep away from me. Don't you hit me. (*He backs out door* R.)

MRS. R. (*turning toward* AUNT *and* ELAINE). And as for you ——

(*Looks at them disdainfully. They smile and exit* L. MRS. R. *looks right and left and then goes to table and stuffs pockets, apron, bosom, etc., with biscuits, fruit and bread. Then sits and eats very rapidly.*)

JERRY (*enters* C.). Where have the rest of the folks gone?

MRS. R. (*has mouth so full she can't speak*). Um?

JERRY (*yelling*). I said where are the rest of the folks?

MRS. R. (*rises, points left and right*. Um-m-m-m-m. [*Exit,* C. D.

JERRY. What in blazes was she trying to tell me?

(*Leans against table and scratches his head, puzzled. Leans against plate of biscuits which he should upset on to floor. Stoops to gather them up and crawls under table in back when* TOM *enters* C. D. *and* ELAINE L.)

ELAINE. Oh, Mr. Denker, I'm so glad I found you alone. You see I want to tell you ——

TOM. Yes, and I want to tell you something. Sit down. (*He places two chairs so that when they sit both his and* ELAINE'S *feet are on the rug.*) I suppose you will think I'm a cad, but I can't help it. Elaine, do you think you could have cared for me if, if ——

ELAINE. If I had met you before I had Mr. Mills?

TOM. Yes.

ELAINE. That is hardly a fair question, Mr. Denker.

TOM. Answer it, please.

ELAINE. I'll answer it with another. Could you have cared for me had you met me before you did—Liz?

TOM. I don't care for Liz. We are just good pals, nothing more.

ELAINE (*surprised*). Why, Mr. Denker.

TOM. It's true. I'm going to tell you the truth of this thing once and for all. I'm not married.

ELAINE. Not married!

TOM. No, not married. It was like this: When I enlisted I owed a lot of money for room rent, clothes and one thing or another, as things hadn't been going just as well as they might for some time previous to the war. I wanted to square things up before I left and as I thought the chances were I would never get back, I wrote Aunt Alice and told her I was married in hopes that she would send me a check for a wedding present,—which she did. Then to-day when I heard she was coming to see me I *had* to have a wife ——

ELAINE. And so you took Liz. Who is she?

TOM. Mrs. Reese's daughter.

ELAINE. I wondered how you could care for a woman with the evident lack of refinement she exhibited.

TOM. Liz is a good sport all right. A mighty fine girl.

ELAINE. No doubt, Mr. Denker, but ——

TOM. Tom. (*Placing his hand on hers.*) Call me Tom, please.

ELAINE. All right then—Tom. No doubt Liz has sterling qualities, but I am really glad she is not your wife. And now to tell you my story. There is something that simply compels me to speak the truth. I don't know just what it is. I am no more married than you are—Tom.

TOM. Thank God!

ELAINE. I never saw Mr. Mills before to-day.

TOM (*points to* ELAINE). You're not married. (*Points to himself.*) I'm not married. What's to prevent *us* from getting married? Nothing. (*Takes her by the hand.*) Come on. You can tell me all about it later.

ELAINE. But, Tom, where are we going?

TOM. To the court house. We're going to get married.

ELAINE. But I must get my hat and ——

TOM. It's only two blocks away and you don't need a hat.

ELAINE. But really I don't think we should.

TOM. Of course we should. Come right along. We'll give them all the surprise of their life.

ELAINE. But really, Tom —— [*They exit,* C. D.

JERRY (*sticking head out from under table cover*). Mighty quick work.

UNCLE (*enters cautiously from kitchen.* JERRY *again hides under table.* UNCLE *crosses to door* L. *and calls*). Alice, come here a moment, will you?

AUNT (*enters* L.). Did you succeed in discharging the housekeeper?

UNCLE. Don't mention that awful woman to me. I do believe she—she ——

AUNT. Has designs on you, William? Is that what you are trying to say?

UNCLE. Something like that.

AUNT. I shouldn't be at all surprised. She evidently knows how to handle herself. I started to console her for the loss of her poor dear Ahenobarbus and discovered he has been dead for fifteen years and that she has had two husbands since he was taken off, luckily for him, I think. Just think of it, William, three husbands. (*Sits on chair with feet on rug.*) Some of us poor lonely old maids can't even get one.

UNCLE (*looks at her a moment, clears throat, looks right and left and then sits beside her*). Look here, Alice. Why did you turn me down the way you did? That was a pretty hard blow to me.

AUNT. I suppose I was foolish but Minnie Swinton told me that you had kissed her ——

UNCLE. I kissed Minnie Swinton? Well, I should say not. Not me! Alice, you were the only girl for me then as you are now. I have never forgotten you, Alice.

AUNT. Nor I you, William.

UNCLE (*wiggles in chair*). It's funny, Alice, but I have such a funny feeling. Something that compels me to talk right out. (*Very loudly.*) Alice, will you marry me?

AUNT. I'm not hard of hearing, William. You needn't shout it from the housetops.

UNCLE. Well, that's an awful load off my mind. What are you going to say?

AUNT. Oh, William, I ——

UNCLE. What's to prevent it? You are—well, you're past twenty-one and I am sure that I'm old enough to know that I want you and damn bad at that.

AUNT. William! I suppose I'll have to say yes if for no other reason than to stop you using such language.

UNCLE (*takes her hand and starts toward* C. D.). All right, come on. Let's do it right away before you change your mind.

AUNT. I won't change my mind but I must change my dress.

UNCLE. You look beautiful to me just as you are. Come on before you take a notion not to. [*They exit,* C. D.

JERRY (*sticking head from under table*). What do you call this place, a matrimonial parlor?

LIZ (*enters* L., *followed by* BING. JERRY *again hides under table*). I ain't a-goin' to do it and that's all there is to it.

BING. Stuck on this picture paintin' chap, I suppose. Old Bing ain't good enough for you. He ain't *refined,* I suppose. You must fly in high society. Huh! What are you goin' to get out of it, I'd like to know?

(*Sits* L. *and lights cigarette.*)

LIZ. Well, what's it to you?

BING. What's it to me? When I sees a bloke as don't even know how to do the shimmie walk in and snatch me Jane right out from under me eyes and you asts me what's it to me? Well, if that ain't pilin' it on, I'll tell the world.

LIZ. *Your* Jane? You gotta nerve. *Your* Jane? Maybe I've got something to say about that.

BING. Well, ain't yuh? Didn't I bring you a bouquet of hollyhocks on your birthday two years ago?

LIZ. Holy Hat! Because the guy spends fifty cents on me for a bunch of jazz posies two years ago he thinks he has me cinched.

BING. Well, you didn't think for a minute that Bing

Dickson would be spending money on flowers for a girl unless he intended to marry her, did yuh?

Liz. Intended? Intended? That's about as far as you got. *Intended* to marry me, did you? Maybe it would be a good idea to *ast* me about it before you *intend* doin' anything like that.

(*Sits on chair* C., *with feet on rug.*)

Bing (*sitting beside her*). Aw, don't be cross at me, kid. You know I think the world of you. And here's this big guy with lots of money ——

Liz. Lots of money? Lord! He's busted flat.

Bing. Busted? Then why are you doin' this for him? You'll get it in the neck, you sure will.

Liz. Humph! I should manifest concern.

Bing. Now tell the truth, Liz, you don't like this guy half as well as you do me, do you?

Liz (*rising; standing on rug*). I like your crust, Bing Dickson. I—I—I—gee! I got a funny feeling. I guess I might as well tell the truth and be done with it. No, I don't like him as well as I do you, Bing, but you're so darned ——

Bing. Well, that's more than I got out of yuh for the last two years. (*Grabs her arm.*) Now, you come with me. (*Starts* C. D.)

Liz. What are you goin' to do?

Bing. Shut up, or I'll bat you one. (*Draws arm back as though to strike her.*) You've been stringin' me along for the past two years and now you're goin' to marry me, do yuh understand? Marry me?

Liz. Oh, Bing, you're jest grand!

Bing. Come on now before that picture guy gets in and has yuh to change your mind. [*They exit,* C. D.

Jerry (*crawls out from under table. Looks after them puzzled. Scratches his head. Then touches rug with one foot; holds it there a moment and then hastily jerks it away. Stoops and picks rug up, examines it carefully*). I wonder if there *is* anything in it? The letter said you would tell the truth whether you wanted

to or not. It made all those women come across before they even had time to say "This is so sudden." It makes you tell the truth. All right, let's try it. (*Lays rug on floor and then stands on it, questioning himself.*) Jerry Smith, do you love Angela Scott? (*Answering.*) Well, she's a mighty nice girl but —— (*Steps off rug, scratches head and looks at it.*) I don't know whether to believe it or not. (*Steps on rug again. Questions himself.*) Jerry Smith, does the suit you have on fit you? (*Answers quickly.*) Not by a darn sight! (*Jumps off rug.*) She worked *that* time all right.

Bob (*enters* R). Where's—where's my wife?

Jerry (*grabs him and stands him on rug*). Bob Mills, are you going to allow me to marry Angela?

Bob. Not by a darn sight!

(*Struggling to get away from* Jerry.)

Jerry. It worked that time, too.

Bob. What the devil are you doing?

Jerry. Just trying a little experiment. Now you go and get your hat and beat it to Miss Scott's room and bring her right back here.

Bob. But I don't understand.

Jerry. You don't need to. Just do as I tell you. It won't take you long. It's only around the corner.

Bob. But what if she won't come?

Jerry. Make her. Now git! (*Shoves him off* L.)

Mrs. R. (*outside*). Liz! Oh, Liz! (*Enters* C. D.) Has Liz been in here?

Jerry. She was but she's gone to get married.

Mrs. R. Hey?

Jerry. You're too late. Liz has gone to get married.

Mrs. R. To get what?

Jerry. Married, married, married, m-a-double r-i-e-d, married. Just plain old fashioned married, that's all.

Mrs. R. Is it? Well, I guess it's not. I knew something bad would come out of the goings-on here to-day. I knew it. I just felt it in my bones. Oh, if only Ahenobarbus ——

JERRY. For God's sake, Mrs. Reese, have a heart. I've heard that so often that I know it forward and backwards. Anyway, you shouldn't blame Liz. You got married yourself three times.

MRS. R. Don't talk to me. Don't speak to me. (*Shakes finger in his face.*) It was you, you that talked me into letting Liz get mixed up in this thing. (JERRY *attempts to speak. She slaps him in the face.*) How dare you talk back to me? You knew it all the time. I suppose you had it planned out, you and your fine friends. Well, I'll show you. Out you go, bag and baggage, all of you. (*Sits by table.*) Oh, Ahenobarbus, things wouldn't 'a' been like this if you hadn't 'a' died.

UNCLE (*enters* C. D. *with* AUNT). Now, what's the row?

JERRY. Liz run off and got married and ——

AUNT. Married! It must be in the air.

JERRY. And didn't ask the old lady and she's peeved. Just plain peeved. I'm going to beat it and let you have your innings. [*Exit,* L.

UNCLE (*going* L.). Here, here, don't leave me. That settles it. I'll fire him for sure now. He can't cook and can't even help you out in a scrape. Out he goes, bag and baggage.

MRS. R. (*who has been listening*). That's jest what I says, out you go, bag and baggage. Oh, Ahenobarbus, if you only hadn't 'a' died.

UNCLE. Oh, Lord! I wonder where Tom ever gathered up this menagerie. Now look here, my good woman ——

MRS. R. Hey?

UNCLE. I said look here, my good woman ——

MRS. R. Don't you good woman me. I ain't your good woman. I won't be talked to like that, I won't.

UNCLE. I meant no offense. That was simply a term of speech. Now as we are talking together there are a few things I would like to tell you.

MRS. R. What are they?

UNCLE. Well, I think things would be all the better for a little change around here.

MRS. R. So do I. Just thirty-two dollars in change from that precious nephew of yours would about even us up before he gets out.

UNCLE. Oh, yes, the thirty-two dollars he owes you ——

MRS. R. Yes, the thirty-two dollars he owes me, that's what I'm talking about. Him and Mr. Mills they both owes me thirty-two dollars for room rent and I calls it a downright shame, I does. Me a poor lone widdy woman with a dog ——

AUNT. Stop it! Stop it! Will, I can't stand to hear her go over that again. Shut here up somehow.

UNCLE. Isn't this thirty-two dollars due you for wages? What do you mean by saying my nephew owes you room rent? Did he room with you before he was married?

MRS. R. Married? Humph! He ain't married. Liz ain't his wife. He's only pretendin' to pull the wool over your eyes.

AUNT (*startled*). Do you mean to tell me that my nephew isn't married to that awful creature, Liz?

MRS. R. (*very dignified*). If it's my daughter, Lizobel Higgins, you're a-talking about, let me inform you, mam, he *ain't*.

AUNT. Thank Heavens!

UNCLE. But, Alice, if he isn't married, look how he has deceived us and for what reason, I should like to know?

AUNT. I don't know what is the reason, why he did it, or anything else about it and what's more, I don't care. If he isn't married to that awful creature I can forgive him anything.

UNCLE. But I want to get the ins and outs of this thing.

MRS. R. You've got the ins right now and as for the outs you're gonna get them mighty quick, for out you go, the whole bunch of you. I runs a respectable house, I does, and none of these here shennanigans as has been goin' on here to-day goes with me.

UNCLE. Oh, dry up! (*Takes bill from pocket and*

hands it to her.) Here! This will help you keep your mouth shut.

MRS. R. Twenty dollars! Oh, thank you. I always said as how you was a gentleman. I says to Liz, I says, as soon as I laid my eyes on you, Liz, I says, that man's a gentleman ——

UNCLE (*shoving her toward* C. D.). Run along and peddle your papers. I never saw a woman in my life that could talk so much and say so little as you can.

MRS. R. And I says to Liz, I says ——

(UNCLE *shoves her out* C. D.)

UNCLE. Now what could she have meant by Tom pulling the wool over our eyes?

AUNT (*sitting at table*). I don't know, Will, and what's more, I really don't care. Tom is too much of a gentleman to go far out of the road and as I told that awful woman if he only isn't married to that, that Liz girl, I can forgive him anything.

BING (*enters* C. D., *followed by* LIZ, *who is urging him in*). Honest to Gawd, I'm a-skeered of the old lady. You see I've eloped with her meal ticket, and she's liable to bust me over the bean with the poker.

LIZ. Well, if you ain't the worst limber Louie I ever saw. (*Notices* AUNT *and* UNCLE.) Can it! We've got a committee to welcome us home. Howdy, folks! Meet me husband. (*Points to* BING.)

AUNT (*looking at* LIZ *steadily for a moment*). Your husband? So this is your husband, is it? About an hour ago you were very proud of the fact that you were Mrs. Thos. Denker, Liz for short.

LIZ. I'm Liz for short, all right, and I sure hates to throw Mr.—Tom down, but I guess I'll have to come across and say I ain't Mrs. Denker.

BING (*proudly*). I should say not! (*Looks at watch.*) She's been Mrs. Archibald Alexander Dickson for jest eleven and one-half minutes.

LIZ. Archibald Alexander! Is them your names?

BING. That's what me mother christened me.

LIZ. If I'd 'a' knowed it I never would have married you. Don't you ever dast tell anybody, now mind.

UNCLE. Now, look here, young lady, what do you mean by masquerading as my nephew's wife, that's what I would like to know. (*Both look at him puzzled;* BING *scratches his head.*) Answer me, why don't you?

LIZ (*makes motions between* BING *and* UNCLE). A nice husband you are to stand there and let old Foxy Grandpa call your darling wife names.

BING. But, honey, I don't get that masker—masker—aw, that stuff what he called you.

LIZ. Of course you don't. That's because you ain't got no education. Any old guy can call your wife names and you don't even know it.

UNCLE. Now look here, you two ——

LIZ. Let *me* talk. You've had your turn. I ain't maskeradin' as nothin'. (TOM *and* ELAINE *appear* C. D.) Now that I'm married to Bing I couldn't keep it up much longer anyway so I might as well tell you. Mr. Denker asked me to let on I was his wife to help him out of a hole when he wrote to the old dame over there ——

(*Points toward* AUNT.)

TOM. Liz!

LIZ (*turns, sees* TOM). Good Night Nurse! Come on, Bing, old boy. Us for the back woods. [*They exit,* L.

TOM (*coming forward*). I noticed Liz was making some explanations as we came in.

UNCLE (*angrily*). Yes, and so can you. What do you mean by having that girl masquerade around as your wife? What sort of a freak farm are you running around here? Where have you been so long with Mrs. Mills and ——

TOM. One question at a time, *please,* Uncle dear. As Liz has let the cat out of the bag I might as well state right here that the only really, truly Mrs. Thos. Denker stands before you. (*Points to* ELAINE.)

AUNT. We have had enough of this foolishness, Tom. (*To* ELAINE.) Elaine, what would your husband think to hear Tom speak of you in such a fashion?

ELAINE. Please don't be cross, Auntie, but I have done just what you said you wanted me to do.

(*Goes to* AUNT.)

AUNT. What *are* you talking about?

ELAINE. I just married Tom. While I only have known him for a few hours ——

AUNT. Elaine! Are you crazy? How could you marry Tom when you are already married to Mr. Mills?

ELAINE. But I never was married to Mr. Mills, I ——

AUNT (*faintly, as she gropes for chair at table*). Will, I—help me to sit down. (UNCLE *goes to her assistance.*) Really I think the trip has been too much for both of us. I can't quite grasp things. (*To* ELAINE.) Do you mean to tell me that you are not married to Mr. Mills?

ELAINE. No, Auntie, I am not.

AUNT. And that you are married to Tom?

ELAINE. Yes, Auntie.

AUNT. Well, upon my word! I hardly know whether to kiss you or turn you over my knee and spank you. Come with me and tell me all about it. (*They start* L., UNCLE *following.*) No, Will, you stay here and attend to Tom. I'll handle Elaine. I think her case will be all the better for a woman handling it anyhow.

[*They exit,* L.

UNCLE. And now, young man, what have you to say for yourself? What do you mean by taking us in the way you have?

TOM. Come here and sit down. (*Places chairs so that when they sit their feet will be on rug.*) Perhaps it was a case of taking you in, Uncle, as you say, but it was just a case of circumstances and I really saw no other way out of it.

UNCLE. Why did you pass that girl off as your wife and why did Elaine ——

TOM. One question at a time, Uncle, as I told you before. Do you remember the time I was up against it and wrote you for help?

UNCLE. Yes, I remember it quite well.

TOM. Do you remember your reply to that letter?

UNCLE. Well—er—I can't just say that I do.

TOM. I remember it quite distinctly. You told me if I *must* paint for a living I should be satisfied with the living it gave me, didn't you?

UNCLE. Well—maybe I did.

TOM. There's no maybe about it, Uncle, you *did*. I was satisfied with the living it gave me until just before the war, as I was doing very well—nothing to brag about, but I was making my mark. Then the war came on and I enlisted.

UNCLE. You couldn't be a Denker and do anything but enlist in a case of that kind.

TOM. When I came back people were a little too busy trying to adjust themselves to their former mode of living to bother their heads much about buying pictures, so I have had a pretty hard time of it. In fact, Bob and I both have, for he has been sharing things with me, what little I had to share.

UNCLE. But I don't see ——

TOM. You will in a minute. I don't know what is making me tell you all this, Uncle, as I have had rather hard feelings toward you and I almost vowed I would have nothing further to do with you after—well, after father died and things were found in the muddle you say they were in.

UNCLE (*clears throat*). Er—ump—er—I ——

TOM. Things came to a head this morning when Mrs. Reese told us that if we didn't pay up out we would go to-morrow night, bag and baggage.

UNCLE. Uh-huh! Then the thirty-two dollars *was* for room rent, was it? And she isn't your housekeeper. She's your landlady.

TOM. Yes.

UNCLE. No wonder she got indignant when I said she could hunt a new place. But you are surely not paying rent for all these rooms, are you?

TOM. No. After I had written how well I was doing and of the beautiful studio I had, I didn't want you to find me out when you came so I borrowed the rooms for the occasion, just the same as I borrowed Liz.

AUNT (*enters* L., *followed by* ELAINE). Oh, Tom, Tom, why couldn't you tell me you were in difficulties and needed money? It was unnecessary for you to deceive me by telling me you were married.

UNCLE. Deceived you, my dear?

AUNT. Yes, he told me he was married before he went to France in hopes that I would send him money for a wedding present, which I did, and which he used to pay his bills before he left.

UNCLE. The young jackanapes! Borrowed the girl so you wouldn't find him out and then borrowed the house so I wouldn't. Pretty smooth.

BOB (*enters* C. D., *with* ANGELA). Don't be grouchy, Angela. (*Goes to* ELAINE.) Please tell her all about it, just like you did to me. I helped you out and it means *so* much to me.

(ANGELA *and* ELAINE *converse silently.*)

AUNT (*to* BOB). And here's the other one. You rascal! I must say, though, that you are a gentleman, the way you helped Elaine out. Come here and give me a kiss. (BOB *kisses her, trying to watch* ELAINE *and* ANGELA *at the same time.*) There, be off with you! I can tell by the look on her face that your troubles are over.

(BOB *joins* ANGELA *and* ELAINE.)

UNCLE (*steps on rug*). Whoopee! (*All turn toward him startled.*) No, I'm not going crazy but that's just how I feel. Tom, your Aunt Alice and I were married this afternoon.

ELAINE. Oh, Aunt Alice!

TOM. And you never told me?

AUNT. There were lots of things happened you never told me, young man.

UNCLE. It's nothing to be surprised about. We should have been married thirty years ago. But that's not what I wanted to tell you, Tom. When you told me that you had decided to become a painter it was a great disappointment to me and I determined to see if you

really meant it or if it was just a fad. Now, your father died worth about five hundred thousand dollars ——

TOM (*angrily*). You ——

UNCLE. Wait a minute, wait a minute. (MRS. R. *enters* C. D.) As I said, your father died worth about five hundred thousand dollars but I held it back on you to see if you had the real stuff in you or not. I didn't want you to squander it on a lot of foolishness, but I see there isn't much danger of it, so I might as well turn it over to you. Any one that can pull off a stunt like you did to-day can handle his own affairs all right. The money's waiting for you in the First National Bank of Keokuk.

TOM. Do you hear that, Elaine? I'm worth five hundred thousand dollars.

MRS. R. Oh, Mr. Tom, I'm that glad. Maybe now you can pay me that thirty-two dollars that you owe me, for you see I have bills coming in right along. There was the ice man yesterday, five dollars and forty-two cents, the grocer man, thirty-eight dollars and twenty-seven cents, the butcher, fifteen dollars and sixty-two cents and —— (TOM *looks toward* UNCLE.)

UNCLE. This is the third time I have started in to pay you off, now here it is. (*Counts money to her.*) Now get out, and for the love of the Lord don't bother us any more to-day. (MRS. R. *exits counting money. To* AUNT.) Really, things haven't turned out so badly after all, have they, my dear? (*They turn and look at* TOM *and* ELAINE *who are talking near window,* BOB *and* ANGELA L.) He's married her, just like you wanted him to and I'm sure I'm a happier man to-night for having come to New York. (*They walk* R. *and talk.*)

JERRY (*enters* L. *Walks up to* TOM *who has back to audience*). I say, old chap. Everything seems to have worked out all right for you. Don't you think you could fix me out with the price of a suit? I don't want to go around looking like a scarecrow all my life. (TOM *makes no answer.* JERRY *waits a moment and then goes to* BOB.) How about fixing me out for the price of a suit, Bob? I see you have everything all fixed up with

Angela, and considering the fact that I—that I—that I—— (*Seeing that* Bob *is not paying attention to him turns and in disgust goes to* Uncle.) I really don't like to ask you, as I never met you until to-day, but I simply must have the price of a suit. You see mine was stolen from me last night in a hotel and—and—and—— (Uncle *pays no attention to him.*) Oh, dammit! (*Starts* L. *and meets* Liz *and* Bing *who enter in deep conversation. They walk across stage and out* R., Jerry *walking beside them. He stares after them a moment and then comes* C. *Stands looking* L. Mrs. Reese *enters slowly counting her money. Walks toward* Jerry *without raising her eyes. Just as she gets to him she stops suddenly and begins to hunt through her pockets, etc., as though she had lost something. Finally reaches in her bosom and pulls out a bill which she adds to the bunch in her hand. Sighs deeply. Looks up and sees* Jerry *watching her. Shoves all the money in her bosom, holds hands over it and rushes out* L. Jerry *looks around again.*) I say, what's the matter with everybody? (*No one pays any attention to him.*) Can't anybody speak? (*Grabs chair and throws it on floor making noise. All run toward him.*) Come to life, did you?

All. What's the matter, etc.

Jerry. I just wanted to find out if there is any one here that would stake me to the price of a suit. You see mine was stolen last night at the hotel along with everything I possessed——

Angela. Bob was just telling me that it was through you he came after me, Dr. Smith, so I would consider it a privilege to help you out of your difficulty.

Uncle. Doctor? Doctor Smith, did you say?

Bob. Yes, Jerry just returned from France. Was over with the Expeditionary Forces.

Uncle. Are you located? Have you a practice?

Jerry. With this suit?

Uncle. They want a competent doctor in the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Keokuk and I know I can land you the place. Would you go?

Jerry. To Keokuk?

UNCLE. Five thousand dollars a year.

JERRY. Lead me to it.

UNCLE (*puts arm around* JERRY'S *shoulder and leads him and* AUNT L.). You know I'm chairman of the Board of Directors and what I say goes, and I was just telling them before I left —— [*They exit,* L.

BOB. By George! Tom, I believe the old rug *did* bring us luck.

TOM. *Believe* it did? I'm sure of it.

JERRY (*rushes in from* L. *excitedly and pulls coat and vest off* BOB). Loan me your coat and vest, old man. I want to send a telegram to Keokuk and I have to go down street to do it.

BOB. You got a nerve! Here, give that back.

JERRY. Just as soon as I get that telegram sent. I want to cinch that job. (*Looks at himself after he has coat on. Then looks at* BOB.) Bob, I hate to go out on the street with these pants. Can't you ——

BOB (*startled*). Well, I should hope not.

(*Grabs* ANGELA'S *hand and runs off* C. D.)

JERRY. The boob! I didn't expect him to take them off *here.* [*Exit,* C. D.

TOM. Hasn't everything turned out beautifully?

ELAINE. Yes, dear.

TOM (*touching rug with his foot*). *That* is going to be the most prized possession of the Thos. Denker family.

ELAINE. That old rug? Why?

TOM. For one thing it has taught me to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and then ——

ELAINE. Then, what?

TOM (*as he puts his arm around her and leads her* R.). It was the means of me winning you, dear.

CURTAIN

LOST—A CHAPERON

A Comedy in Three Acts by Courtney Bruerton and W. S. Maulsby. Six male, nine female characters. Costumes, modern; scenery, an interior and an exterior. Plays a full evening. A lot of college girls in camp lose their chaperon for twenty-four hours, and are provided by a camp of college boys across the lake with plenty of excitement. The parts are all good, the situations are very funny and the lines full of laughs. Recommended for high-school performance. *Price, 25 cents*

THE PRIVATE TUTOR

A Farce in Three Acts by E. J. Whisler. Five male, three female characters. Costumes, modern; scenery, two simple interiors. Plays two hours. Tells of the endeavors of two college boys to disguise the fact that they have been "rusticated" from the family of one of them. Hans Dinklederfer, the leader of a German band, trying to make good in the character of a private tutor, is a scream. All the parts are good. A capital high-school play. *Price, 25 cents*

THE REBELLION OF MRS. BARCLAY

A Comedy of Domestic Life in Two Acts by May E. Countryman. Three male, six female characters. Costumes, modern; scenery, easy interiors. Plays one hour and three-quarters. A clever and amusing comedy with all the parts evenly good. There are many Mr. Barclays all over this country, and Mrs. Barclay's method of curing her particular one will be sympathetically received. Good Irish comedy parts, male and female. Strongly recommended. *Price, 25 cents*

THE TRAMPS' CONVENTION

An Entertainment in One Scene for Male Characters Only by Jessie A. Kelley. Seventeen male characters. Costumes, typical tramp dress; scenery, unimportant. Plays an hour and a half. An entertainment in the vaudeville class, with possibilities of unlimited fun. Music can be introduced, if desired, though this is not necessary. The opening is very funny and original and the finish—The Ananias Club—can be worked up to any extent. Strongly recommended. *Price, 25 cents*

THE DAY THAT LINCOLN DIED

A Play in One Act by Prescott Warren and Will Hutchins. Five male, two female characters. Costumes, modern; scene, an easy exterior. Plays thirty minutes. A very effective play suited for a Lincoln Day entertainment. It offers plenty of comedy, and is a piece that we can heartily recommend. Professional stage-rights reserved. *Price, 25 cents*

PA'S NEW HOUSEKEEPER

A Farce in One Act by Charles S. Bird. Three male, two female characters. Modern costumes; scenery, a simple interior or none at all. Plays forty minutes. Jack Brown, visiting his chum, is tempted by his success in college theatricals to make up in the character of the new housekeeper, an attractive widow, who is expected but does not arrive. He takes in everybody and mixes things up generally. All the parts are first rate and the piece full of laughs. Strongly recommended. *Price, 15 cents*

THE SUBMARINE SHELL

A War Play in Four Acts

By Mansfield Scott

Seven males, four females. Costumes, modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays two hours. Royalty for amateur performance $10.00 for one, $15.00 for two performances. Inspector Malcome Steele, of the U. S. Secret Service, devotes himself in this thrilling play to unravelling the German plots that surround Prof. Middlebrook's submarine shell that is to bring the downfall of the Hun. The battle between his wits and those of "Tom Cloff," the German secret agent, is of absorbing interest. An easy and effective thriller that can be recommended for school performance.

Price, 25 cents

CHARACTERS

HANS KRAFT, *alias James McGrady.*
OTTO HERMAN, *alias William.*
MR. WARREN MIDDLEBROOK.
MONSIEUR CHARLES LECLAIR.
PROFESSOR HENRY WESTERBERG.
DETECTIVE ALBERT BRADBURY.
INSPECTOR MALCOME STEELE.
"TOM CLOFF."
MRS. MIDDLEBROOK.
ELEANOR MIDDLEBROOK.
MARGARET LINDEN.
DELIA.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. The living-room. August 11, after dinner.
ACT II. Same as Act I. August 12, 1:30 P. M.
ACT III. The private laboratory. That evening, 7:30.
ACT IV. Same as Act III. Later, 10 P. M.

THE AMERICAN IDEA

A Sketch in One Act

By Lily Carthew

Three males, two females. Costumes, modern; scenery, an interior. Plays twenty minutes. Royalty for amateur performance $5.00. Mignon Goldman, following the American Idea, throws off the parental yoke and marries the man of her choice and not the choice of her parents. She brings home for the parental blessing John Kelly. Abe, her father, is disconsolate at this prospect until he sees John and recognizes in him Yan Kele Operchinsky, rechristened in accordance with "The American Idea." Originally produced at The Peabody Playhouse, Boston. Strongly recommended. *Price, 25 cents.*

THE CROWNING OF COLUMBIA

A Patriotic Fantasy in One Act

By Kathrine F. Carlyon

Twenty-five boys and twenty-four girls Costumes, modern and picturesque. Nothing required in the way of scenery but a platform. Plays half an hour or less. Columbia is approached by the Foresters, the Farmers, the Miners, the Pleasure Seekers, the Ammunition Workers and even the Red Cross Workers, all asking her to be their Queen, but it is only when the Soldiers and the Red Cross Nurses come, asking nothing and giving all, that she yields. Easy, pretty, timely, and strongly recommended. Introduces music. *Price, 25 cents*

TEDDY, OR, THE RUNAWAYS

A Comedy in Three Acts

By Walter Ben Hare

(*Originally produced at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York City, February 16, 1912.*)

Four males, four females. Scenery, a single interior; costumes, modern. Plays two and a quarter hours. An eloping couple take refuge with the Junipers when their auto breaks down. The lady explains that they are being pursued by her brothers, so when a sheriff and posse arrive in pursuit of two thieves, Mrs. Juniper locks them down cellar to let the lovers escape. The sheriff gets out and arrests the Junipers whom he accuses of being the thieves. It finally appears that the lady is an authoress and that she and her husband are posing as thieves in order to get material for a novel. Full of action; characters all good; lots of comedy; strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

CHARACTERS

JEAN MACLEAN, *Little Miss Fixit.*
MRS. JUNIPER, *a Young Wife.*
VICTORIA, *the Girl in the Taxi.*
TEXANA, *the Girl of the Golden West.*
MAX JUNIPER, *the Perplexed Husband.*
ALONZO WILLING, *the Fortune Hunter.*
TED KEEGAN, *the Man on the Box.*
SHERIFF JIM LARRABEE, *Officer 666.*
Two Deputy Sheriffs

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Living room at Max Juniper's house on a Texas ranch. Spring time.
ACT II.—Same as Act I. The great diamond robbery.
ACT III.—Same as Acts I and II. The thunderbolt.

WANTED—A PITCHER

A Farce in One Act

By M. N. Beebe

Eleven males. Scenery not important; costumes, modern. Plays half an hour. Hank Dewberry, the crack pitcher of the home nine, is kept from the championship game by his skinflint father who wants him to do the haying. Hank's friends try to find a substitute pitcher, with humorous but unsatisfactory results. The elder Dewberry finally releases Hank when one of the players shows him how to win the county championship at checkers, on which he sets his heart. Hebrew, Irish, Italian and "hay seed" comedy character parts. Recommended.

Price, 15 cents

RED ACRE FARM

A Rural Comedy Drama in Three Acts by Gordan V. May. Seven males, five females. Costumes, modern; scenery, one interior, one exterior. Plays two hours. An easy and entertaining play with a well-balanced cast of characters. The story is strong and sympathetic and the comedy element varied and amusing. Barnaby Strutt is a great part for a good comedian; "Junior" a close second. Strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

THE COUNTRY MINISTER

A Comedy Drama in Five Acts by Arthur Lewis Tubbs. Eight males, five females. Costumes, modern; scenery not difficult. Plays a full evening. A very sympathetic piece, of powerful dramatic interest; strong and varied comedy relieves the serious plot. Ralph Underwood, the minister, is a great part, and Roxy a strong soubrette; all parts are good and full of opportunity. Clean, bright and strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

THE COLONEL'S MAID

A Comedy in Three Acts by C. Leona Dalrymple. Six males, three females. Costumes, modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays a full evening. An exceptionally bright and amusing comedy, full of action; all the parts good. Capital Chinese low comedy part; two first-class old men. This is a very exceptional piece and can be strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

MOSE

A Comedy in Three Acts by C. W. Miles. Eleven males, ten females. Scenery, two interiors; costumes, modern. Plays an hour and a half. A lively college farce, full of the true college spirit. Its cast is large, but many of the parts are small and incidental. Introduces a good deal of singing, which will serve to lengthen the performance. Recommended highly for co-educational colleges. *Price, 15 cents*

OUR WIVES

A Farce in Three Acts by Anthony E. Wills. Seven males, four females. Costumes, modern; scenery, two interiors. Plays two hours and a half. A bustling, up-to-date farce, full of movement and action; all the parts good and effective; easy to produce; just the thing for an experienced amateur club and hard to spoil, even in the hands of less practical players. Free for amateur performance. *Price, 25 cents*

THE SISTERHOOD OF BRIDGET

A Farce in Three Acts by Robert Elwin Ford. Seven males, six females. Costumes, modern; scenery, easy interiors. Plays two hours. An easy, effective and very humorous piece turning upon the always interesting servant girl question. A very unusual number of comedy parts; all the parts good. Easy to get up and well recommended. *Price, 25 cents*

THE SLACKER

A Patriotic Play in One Act

By Jewell Bothwell Tull

Two male, seven female characters. Scene, an interior; costumes, modern and military. Plays forty minutes. The hero, beyond the draft age, has not enlisted because he deems it to be his widowed mother's wish and his sweetheart's preference, as well as his own duty not to do so. He tries on the uniform of a friend who is going, "just to be in it once," and being discovered, finds to his surprise that both his mother and his fiancée have been miserable under the charge that he is a "slacker" and are rejoiced to have him make good. Picturesque, patriotic, dramatic—an ideal play for a Red Cross Entertainment. Strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

CHARACTERS

GRANT MOORE.
MRS. MOORE, *his mother.*
BETTY CALDWELL, *his fiancée.*
BENNY SMITH, *a young lieutenant.*
MRS. SMITH, *his mother.*
ELLA BROWN, *his sweetheart.*
MRS. RALPH.
MRS. ELTON.
MRS. JONES.

Other ladies and girls of the Marsville Red Cross Society.

A ROMANCE IN PORCELAIN

A Comedy in One Act

By Rudolph Raphael

Three males, one female. Scene, an interior; costumes, modern. Plays twenty minutes. Cecilia and Clarence, engaged to marry, resort to Dr. Spencer before the knot is tied to secure a new upper set. Their troubles in concealing their errand from each other reach a climax when both sets are stolen and the truth has to come out. Very funny and heartily recommended.

Price, 25 cents

A PROFESSIONAL VISIT

A Comedy in One Act

By Rudolph Raphael

Two males, one female. Scene, an interior; costumes, modern. James Winthrop, impecunious, calls upon his old friend, Dr. Raleigh, also hard up, to discuss the situation, and ends by getting engaged to the Doctor's landlady, a rich widow, who calls to collect the rent. Very swift work. Recommended.

Price, 25 cents

THE GO-BETWEEN

A Dramatic Comedy Playlet

By Harry L. Newton

One male, two females. Scene, an interior; costumes, modern. Plays twenty minutes. Hezekiah, jilted on the eve of his wedding to Muriel, a heartless adventuress, who has ruined him, is rescued from suicide by Jane, a country sweetheart, in a capital little piece, mingling humor and pathos most adroitly. Strongly recommended.

Price, 25 cents

TAKING THE CENSUS IN BINGVILLE

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